

20  
The chief Interest of Man;  
O R,

*W* A Discourse of  
**RELIGION,**

Clearly demonstrating  
The Equity of the Precepts of  
the Gospel, and how much a  
due Observance thereof doth con-  
duce to the happiness and well-  
being, as well of

Humane Societies,

As of

Particular Persons.

---

By *H. Lukin.*

---

Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee what I  
have yet to speak on Gods behalf, *Job 36.2.*  
*Dicam ego quid sentiam, dicent forte meliora*  
*doctiores. Aug. contra Faustum.*

---

The Second Edition.

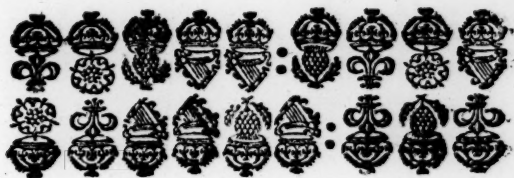
---

London, Printed by *J. C.* for *T. Bassett* at  
the George in Fleet-street, near Clif-  
ford's Inne. 1670.

---







THE  
PREFACE  
To the  
READER.

**A**mongst so many  
Books wherewith  
the World is fil-  
led, it may justly  
be expected that  
none should obtrude more upon  
it, without giving a fair ac-  
count thereof, unless they  
have attained to that repute  
for Wisdome which Job had,

## The Preface

Chap. 29. 21. &c. that men give ear, and wait, and keep silence at their counsel, waiting for it as for the rain, and opening their mouth wide as for the latter rain: *such need no Apology to bespeak a reception of their Labors; but it is far from me to reckon myself of that number, haudequidem tali me dignor honore: yet I must confess it is not much that I have to say in my own defence. The persuasion of Friends, from an opinion of the usefulness of such Books as Men publish, is such a common Apology, that the world grows weary of it. If I should say that scribunt indocti doctique was an old observation, so that it is no new thing for Men of small Learning to write Books; it might well be retorted, that the World hath suffered so much*

## To the Reader.

much by such Mens Writings; that it is pittie they should suffer any more by them. It will be but a poor Plea to say that I have written but little, and so shall put men to the expence of very little time or money for the reading of it; if the little which I have written may not probably be of some advantage to the World: But this, through the blessing of God, I am not without hopes of. If one sinner might hereby be converted from the error of his way, I should account it an happy fruit, and abundant recompence of my well-intended endeavors: but if the disobedient may not be hereby increased to the wisdom of the just, yet I hope the children of wisdom will hereby be established and encouraged to hold fast their integrity, and be

## The Preface

Chap. 29. 21. &c. that men give ear, and wait, and keep silence at their counsel, waiting for it as for the rain, and opening their mouth wide as for the latter rain: *such need no Apology to bespeak a reception of their Labors; but it is far from me to reckon my self of that number, haud equidem tali me dignor honore: yet I must confess it is not much that I have to say in my own defence. The persuasion of Friends, from an opinion of the usefulness of such Books as Men publish, is such a common Apology, that the world grows weary of it. If I should say that scribunt indocti doctique was an old observation, so that it is no new thing for Men of small Learning to write Books; it might well be retorted, that the World hath suffered so much*

## To the Reader.

much by such Mens writings;  
that it is pittie they should suf-  
fer any more by them. It  
will be but a poor Plea to say  
that I have written but little,  
and so shall put men to the ex-  
pence of very little time or  
money for the reading of it,  
if the little which I have  
written may not probably be  
of some advantage to the  
World: But this, through the  
blessing of God, I am not  
without hopes of. If one sin-  
ner might hereby be converted  
from the error of his way, I  
should account it an happy  
fruit, and abundant recom-  
pence of my well-intended en-  
deavors: but if the disobe-  
dient may not be hereby in-  
structed to the wisdom of the just,  
yet I hope the children of wis-  
dom will hereby be established  
and encouraged to hold fast  
their integrity, and be per-

## The Preface

nished with that, wherewith they may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. If the Ethiopians paint Angels black, and Devils white, because they are black themselves, and Pride themselves in it as their beauty, this makes not us to dislike our own complexion; neither can they perswade us to wash ourselves with Ink, that we may be like them. If therefore some men glory in their shame, and account it their honour to be like the Devil, or hate holiness, wherein men do most resemble God, and bear his Image, as it is said of the Basilisk, that its enmity against Man is such, that it will fly with rage upon the Picture of a man; let not this be a temptation to us to learn their ways; let them return to us, let us not return

## To the Reader.

turn to them, Jer. 15. 19. If our adversary should write a Book against us, (that I may allude to the words of Job, chap. 31. 35, &c.) if it be of scorn and reproaches, let us bind it to us as a Crown, and say as David, 2 Sam. 6. 21. I will yet be more vile, if to obey God, and be like to him, be to be vile: but if he will encounter us in good earnest, with serious arguments, let us go near to him as a Prince, and not fear, having all the reasons that can be drawn from the authority of our Sovereign Lord and Law-giver, from our own interest, from equity, ingenuity and gratitude, on our side.

I shall not be very solicitous or industrious to decline or anticipate the Censures of others; I know it is ordinarily

## The Preface

rily supposed, that men of no name, that have not that real worth which may make others take notice of them, have that petty design in publishing such things as are more admired by themselves than by any body else, to get themselves a Name, and to make themselves and their own supposed worth known to the World. Let men think of me as they please; I hope there is none shall think more meanly of me, than I do of myself; and I am such an impartial judge of my own Labors, that I am so far from projecting thereby for any esteem or credit in the World, that I should rather, if that were my aim and design, have held my peace, which is the way for a fool to be counted wise, Prov. 17. 28.

One thing I would advertise



## To the Reader.

*tise the Reader of, that this Treatise was written in another Nation, after some years observations of the lives and manners of such as in other parts of the World profess Christianity, both Papists and Protestants, the manner of whose conversation I was then better acquainted with, than of those of our own Nation: which I hope may suffice to free me from all suspicion of having any oblique aspect upon particular Persons, or any particular sort of men, or of calculating this Treatise onely for our own Meridian, and for our own Times. I know, were it in other Languages, it might indifferently serve for any place where the Gospel hath been Preached, and might have had its use in the purest times which have been since the Christian Name was known. That*  
little

## The Preface

*little I have seen of the World, will easily keep me from judging our own Nation the worst of any that profess Religion, unless the priviledges which we enjoy above others, do raise our guilt to a greater height; and I am not so unacquainted with the History of former Ages, as being surprized to cry out, O tempora! O mores! or to make that unwise enquiry, Eccl 7.10. what is the cause that the former dayes were better than these? I confess I have sometimes been in Pauls case, Act 17.16. when I have observed amongst the generality of Christians in all places, so much difference betwixt mens principles and practises, and so many professing to know God, which in works deny him; and this hath made me sometimes express my self with the greater passion  
and*

## To the Reader.

*and vehemency, as knowing the terror of the Lord, and grieved to see the misery that so many without repentance are hastning to: for, though I owe a special love to those of the household of faith, yet I profess my self a Citizen of the Universe, and so have a charity and compassion towards all.*

THE





## SECTION I.

*Whether there be any Atheists.  
What it is that leads men  
to Atheism. Those the worst  
Atheists, that believe there  
is a God, yet live as if there  
were none; and account it  
a mean thing to be awed by  
him.*

**A** Spartan being invited  
to hear an Oration in  
commendation of Her-  
cules, replied, *Ecquis  
eum vituperat?* Doth  
any body speak against him? And  
some will think I might *periturae par-  
cere chartæ*, or rather better imploy  
precious irrevocable hours, then in  
Apologizing for that which needs  
no defence, and which there is such  
a reverence of so deeply implanted

2     *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
in every mans nature. But upon a  
nearer approach, and exact survey  
of things, we shall find there is no-  
thing in the World doth either need  
or deserve a more serious confide-  
ration and just defence. *The Spe-*  
*culative Atheist* is such a Monster,  
that many will hardly admit of such  
a thing in nature: And it seems in-  
credible to them, that any should  
doubt of a *Deity*. Yet daily expe-  
rience and observation refutes our  
more rational and retired Specula-  
tions, and hath put many Learned  
men to the labour of proving that  
there is a God; this being the utmost  
we are able in the Theory to make  
good, *That there are none think that*  
*there is no God, but such as for whom it*  
*were well if there were none:* And  
these being judicially given up to  
be seduced by their own lusts, first  
think it would be well for them if  
there were no God, finding his com-  
mands crossing their Carnal interests  
and corrupt desires; thence they pro-  
ceed to wish there were no God, and  
by degrees arrive at flat *Atheism*, inor-  
dinate passions converting *Desire* into  
*Opinion*

*Opinion* ( as we easily believe that which we earnestly desire ) that so having baffled their judgements, and drawn them into the same confederacy with their Luts, they may sin without their control or contradiction, and avoid the reproofs of their Consciences, while they give up themselves freely to satisfy their vile affections. *His gradibus itur.* I affirm the *Practical Atheist* is yet a greater wonder, and a more horrid Monster then the *Speculative Atheist* : ( As *Mirandula* hath well observed ) *It is a wonder that any should doubt of the truth of the Gospel, after so many evident proofs of it; but a greater wonder that any should believe it, and yet live as if it were not true.* But take his own words, wherein he doth so fully and elegantly express himself, Ep. 1. ad Nepotem. *Tenet me (Deum testor) aliquando ecstasis quasi, & stupor quidam, cum meum incipio studia hominum, aut (ut dixerim significatius) meras insanias, nescio an cogitare potius quam dolere, mirari an deplorare: magna enim profecto insania Evangelio non credere, cujus veritatem san-*

4 The chief Interest of Man; or,  
*guis Martyrum clamat, Apostolica re-  
sonant voces, prodigia probant, ratio  
confirmat, mundus testatur, elementa  
loquuntur, demones confitentur. Sed  
longe major insania, si de Evangelii  
veritate non dubitas, vivere tamen quasi  
de falsitate ejus non dubitares.* How  
many thousands of Zealots have we  
that profess the name of Christ, and  
presume violently that they shall be  
saved by him! yet look into their  
conversations, and you would not be-  
lieve their own mouths, or imagine  
that they are seriously perswaded  
that there is a God, an Heaven, an  
Hell, a Judgement to come where-  
in they shall be sentenced to their  
everlasting home.

Nay, hear O Heavens, and be asto-  
nished O Earth! hath any people  
dealt so with their gods, which are  
yet no Gods, as Christians deal with  
Christ? Do Turks deal so with their  
*Mahomet*? Do they scorn those that  
are most careful to observe the Rules  
of his *Alcoran*? Are they ashamed  
to be seen to have any respect to his  
Laws? Yet I call Heaven and Earth  
to record against Christians, that *be*  
that



that turns from his wickedness, makes himself a prey; yea, as *Salvian* complained of old, *Mali esse coguntur, ne viles habeantur.* De Gubernatione Dei, lib. 4. Men are fain to turn Rebels against Christ, and cast off the fear of his Commands, to free themselves from the scorn and hatred of Christians; amongst whom he must go for a Melancholick dull sot or sneaking fool, and one that hath nothing of generosity, that dare not set his mouth against Heaven, or defie the Authority of his Maker; inso-much, that he that cannot harden himself against scorn, shall be jeered out of Heaven; he shall forfeit the reputation of his breeding, that shall speak a word of the Scriptures; he shall pass for a silly fellow, that will abandon the pleasures of sin in hopes of an unseen-Glory; and he shall be accounted importunate or uncivil, that shall interrupt Mens carnal mirth by casting in the ingratelul mention of God or his Commands, and be thought unfit for the company of Persons of Quality and Breeding. Of old, they accounted it the sum

6 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
and substance of Religion, *to imitate*  
*him whom they worshipped.* Those  
that adored Mortal Deities (such as  
*Alexander and Cæsar*) were ambitious  
to imitate their *Vertues*; yea, some  
Emperors have been imitated by their  
flattering Courtiers in their *Defects*  
and *Deformities*. The holiness of  
God is his Glory, and (of all his at-  
tributes) propounded to us for our  
imitation; see 1 Pet. 1. 15. *Exod.*  
15. 17. and compare *Isa.* 6. 3. with  
*John* 12. 40. And yet how do men  
glory in their *shame*, while they are  
*ashamed* of their *glory*! *Phil.* 3. 19.  
*Fer.* 2. 36. But that some are wiser  
then to be so befooled out of Hea-  
ven, holiness would be hissed out of  
the World.

How many think it a greater re-  
proach to call one a Saint, then a  
Drunkard, a Whoremonger, or what-  
ever is evil! When the Scripture  
makes this a title of honor, and that  
from whence they are so denomina-  
ted absolutely necessary to Salvation.  
O let not these things be told in *Gath*,  
or published in *Ascalon*. Let not  
Turks and Heathens hear such things  
of

of Christians. What God do we worship? What Saviour do we own? Are they like the Idols of the Heathens? who (as *Tertullian* said of old) *Iam frustra coluntur, quam impune leduntur*; are worshipped in vain, and may be abused at our pleasure.

Quit your selves like men, awake your reason, and consider what I shall say for God, and for his holy Laws, which are (as the Apostle saith) not onely *holy*, but *just* and *good*, *Rom. 7. 12.* so that (as hath been well observed by Learned men) if God had never commanded what he hath done, nor made any Transcript of the Eternal Law out of the *Idea* of his holy nature; yet, what he hath commanded would have been best for Mankind to observe. There is not onely an *equity* in them, but they are good *naturally*, as well as *morally*, conducing to the welfare of Mankind, the good of the Universe; insomuch, that if we had stood on even ground with our Maker, and capitulated with him on what terms we would submit our selves to him, and what Laws we would be obliged to observe,

8 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
observe, we could not have made conditions more for our own advantage: or if Christ should wave his authority which he hath over us to *command* us (though the authority of the Superior is more to be regarded then the advantage of the Inferior) he might justly *counsel* us, as *Rev.* 3.18, to observe his Precepts, as that which would be best for our selves; and if we had no respect to his Sovereignty, yet regard to our own welfare and happiness might oblige us thereto.

And having evinced the *equity* of the ways of God, and the benefit men have thereby, I shall endeavour to discover and remove the causes of this *Practical Atheism* that reigns so much in the World: and though I know, after all I can say, the Disease will despise any remedy; yet let me tell all the prophane scorers of Godliness, till they can deprive themselves of reason, that is, become beasts, God and his Saints shall have a witness in their breasts against their own souls.

SECT.

SECT. II.

*The equity of Gods commands.*

*Love (which is the fulfilling of the Law) founded on Gods Goodness, Patience, Bounty. Fear (which with that observance that is the effect of it, is the whole Duty of Man) founded on his Power and Wisdom. Ratio rei, or Reason it self, the ground of such things as are of natural right. Gods Sovereignty the ground of such things as are of positive right.*

**I** Shall begin with the Equity of Gods Commands, and shew how reasonably he requires the observance of them; his Nature most justly challenging, and the excellency of his Attributes really meriting whatsoever his Law exacts as our duty. Man hath (as the Moralists observe)

10 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
but a *Political* Dominion over his af-  
fections, not such a *Despotical* and  
absolute power as over his locomo-  
tive faculty, and so over his outward  
actions; so that he cannot love, and  
hate, and fear, and desire as he list.  
The Soul being a rational Agent,  
moveth it self in respect of all Ob-  
jects according to what it sees there  
of *good* or *evil*, which begets *liking* or  
*aversion*. Wherefore *Arrogancy* is one  
of the most contemptible vanities  
amongst the Sons of men; it being  
the most ridiculous thing in the  
world, for men to require of others  
that honor, esteem, reverence, which  
they have no real worth in them-  
selves to be a foundation of. And  
it is worse Tyrannie then that of the  
*Egyptian Task-Masters*, who required  
brick without giving straw. They say  
indeed, *Honor est in honorante*, de-  
pending on the will of the giver; yet  
it must be *radically* in him that is  
honored; there must be a Foundati-  
on laid by him, whereon others must  
raise their esteem of him. Wherefore  
the charge is given to *Timothy* and  
*Titus*, that none should despise them;  
that

that is, they were to carry themselves with that gravity, prudence, integrity, that none might have occasion to think meanly and contemptibly of them. Now there is in God a real foundation for all those affections, which he requires of us as the principles of all our outward actions, whereby they are formed and fashioned.

First, God requires that we should love him with all our might, with all our strength, with our whole Soul; and this is in effect *the keeping of his commands, the fulfilling of his Law*; Love being the *Queen-Regent*, the commanding affection of the Soul, the first mover that sets all on work (as *Austin* saith) *Amor meus pondus meum eo feror quocunque feror*: Love is the byas which turns us where-ever we go. We may judge of the power of this affection, by observing the effects of it in our selves; where we do truly love, how careful are we to please? how fearful to offend? how desirous to enjoy? how ambitious to serve? how unwearied in serving? how ready to run hazards, to undergo

12 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
dergo difficulties? what sympathy is  
there of all affections? what jea-  
lousie? So that God needs require  
no more of us; for if he have our  
*Love*, the rest will follow. Now it  
were not bebecoming the Majestie of  
God to require this of us, were there  
not that in his nature and his works  
that did justly deserve it; but there  
is nothing in the creature attractive  
of our Love, which is not eminent-  
ly in him: *How great is his goodness!*  
*how great is his beauty!* Zach. 9. 17.  
that is, those perfections of his nature,  
which being found in the Creature  
infinitely below what they are in him,  
make it amiable to us.

*Goodness* and *greatness*, where they  
meet in *Man*, are very *desirable* and  
*lovely*; but God is *Optimus Maximus*  
(as he is wont to be called) *the great-*  
*est* and *the best*, not exceeding us more  
in his *greatness*, then in his *goodness*;  
in his *Glory*, then in his *Grace*, Mich.  
7. 18. What narrow bounds did *Peter*  
set to his forbearance, when he asked  
if he should forgive his Brother seven  
times? What would soon become of  
us, if the forbearance of God were



confined within such narrow limits? We indeed pass by many offences in others, because we know not how to revenge them; but God could every moment, by a word of his mouth, an act of his will, let us know what it is to contemn his Authority. And let us but consider the disproportion between God and Man, how infinitely he is above him; and the nature of God, how holy, and contrary to whatsoever is evil; and we shall much more admire his patience and goodness. We can do good to our *Friends*, we who are evil; but to do good to *Enemies*, whom we have daily in our power, and who still continue their enmity against us, is too hard for us. God is good to *Angels* that never sinned, *patient* onely to *sinners*. Let us but recount the various acts of his Providence towards us, consider the daily care which he hath of us, the mercies which we daily receive from him, the evil he preserveth us from; what offers he makes to us of an Eternal Glory with himself, what means he affords for obtaining it, how long  
space

14 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
space of repentance he gives us; and  
we shall find our obligations to him  
to be infinitely beyond what they are  
to *Parents, Princes, Friends*; disloy-  
alty and ingratitude to whom is con-  
demned, abhorred of all.

Further, *the fear of God is the whole Duty of man*, Eccles. 12. 13. that is, *efficienter*, though not *formaliter*; for wherever it is, it doth bind the Soul to its duty, *Job* 28. 28. *Prov.* 1. 7. And I may say as much for this, as for the Love of God. Methinks it is condescension in him, to argue the matter as he doth with sinners, *Jer.* 5. 22. *Matth.* 10. 28. when he might let them run upon their own ruine, and know by experience the danger that they despise. We should deride the threatnings of some vain boaster that should go about to affright us with such things as it were far above his power to effect; but the frown of a *Cæsar*, an *Alexander*, might make us tremble. It is the most astonishing madness and folly in the World, for men to account it generosity and braveness of spirit, not to be awed by the great words of Scri-  
pture,

pture, to dare to sin, to take courage  
against God like the *Philistines*,  
1 *Sam.* 4. 9. and to account it mean-  
ness of spirit, to be affrighted with  
the threatnings of an invisible God,  
whose greatness we neither see nor  
feel, though it is our own fault, we  
seeing it in its effects every day. It  
is he that hangs the *Earth* on no-  
thing, and when he pleases makes it  
tremble; sends the *Sun* on his errand  
every day, orders the Host of Heaven,  
making every Star keep its place;  
thundering with his voyce, so as he  
can make the Emperors of the World  
run to hide themselves; setting  
bounds to the raging waves of the  
Sea, which they dare not pass: and  
though he doth not every day re-  
veal his wrath from Heaven against  
sinners, yet he hath told us, it is not  
because he approves of their ways, or  
knows not how to right himself; he  
onely stays till the time of the *Reve-*  
*lation* of his righteous judgement,  
and then he vwill pour out his vvrath  
like fire, and make the stoutest sin-  
ners run (if it vvere possible for them)  
under the Rocks and Mountains to  
hide

16 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
hide themselves from his presence.  
*David* and *Solomon* were both feared  
for their *Wisdom*; and indeed,  
*Wisdom* doth make a mans face to  
shine, commanding reverence and a  
kind of veneration from others. Now  
there is none to be compared to God  
for *Wisdom*; he is so wise, he cannot  
be deceived, cannot be mocked; he  
sees through the most secret designs  
of men, and laughs them to scorn;  
takes the wise in their own craftiness,  
makes those that dare transgress his  
*Precepts*, whether they will or no,  
to fulfil his purpose, overreaching  
them in their most cunning contrivances,  
making them serve his holy ends  
when they least intend it. Further,  
he requires that we should acknowledge  
him in all our ways, owning him as  
our *Sovereign* in the observance of his  
*Precepts*, as our *Preserver* in depending  
on his *Providence*. And what more just  
and equal? when we had our being  
from him, when we live and move  
in him, when we are daily maintained  
at his cost and charges, and are therefore  
sent to the *Ox* and the *Ass* to learn our duty;

it being he that gives us all things richly to enjoy, and hath not onely *right* and authority to *command* us, but *might* and power to *force* us : so that if we will do any thing without his leave, or *moral* permission, we cannot do it without his *natural* permission. If we run away from his service, he can command the Sea to way-lay us (as in the case of *Jonah*) and send a Whale to fetch us back. If we would go out of the reach of his Rod, he can make it reach us where-ever we go, as the *Israelites* in their going to *Egypt*, Jer.42.16. In short, he commands the boisterous Winds, the unruly Waves; the Angels, that excel in might and glory; the Devils, that are filled with rage and envy; the Sun, that as a Gyant runs his race, and makes it stand still at his pleasure; the Stars, whom he makes as his Host to fight his battels; the Frogs, the Flies, the Lice, the Bears, the Lyons, the Ravens; as the several instances in holy Scripture shew. All these are at his beck, and he sends them at his pleasure. Degenerate Man onely (for whom he hath

18 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
hath done more then for any of the  
works of his hands, and whom he  
hath made capable of more happines  
then the whole visible Creation) casts  
off the authority of his Creator in  
those things, wherein especially it  
would be his *Wisdom* to make a *ver-*  
*tue* of *necessity*: for when men will  
venture upon any thing without ask-  
ing Gods leave, or taking his coun-  
sel, he stands by and derides their  
counsels, and tells them that he is  
wise also, and will bring evil upon  
them, and not call back his word:  
what he saith shall be done, none shall  
disanul it; when their designs which  
they would undertake without him  
shall come to nothing, and they  
perish in them, *Isa. 31.2.* Thus God  
will sooner or later teach all, what  
it is to despise his authority, or to  
dispute his commands.

As for our outward actions (what  
I have already said concerning our in-  
ternal affections, and those acts and  
attributes of God whereon they are  
grounded, being supposed) though  
they should not be of any natural  
right, or have any intrinick goodness  
in

in them, antecedently to any command of God concerning them, (which yet doubtless some have, and are therefore commanded, because good, as those which are grounded on the precepts of the Law of Nature) yet as we say of the *Credenda*, or the things which we are to believe, though our finite understandings be not able to comprehend the nature and causes of some of them, yet we have reason enough to believe them, because they are spoken by him that cannot lye; so I may say of the *Agenda* of Religion, though they should not be of *natural moral right* (which yet many of them are) yet being commanded by him who is so vwise and so good, to vvhom we have such obligations lying upon us, and on vvhom vve have such an absolute dependance, vve have all the reason in the World to do them, vvithout murmuring or disputing.

And though the Sovereignty of God is such, that he might justly try our obedience, and make us knowv our subjection to him, by requiring of us such things as are meerly of  
*positive*

20 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
*positive right*; yet it is evident, that in  
vvhat he hath required, he hath not  
stood much upon his *Soveraignty*  
and *Authority*, but hath commanded  
such things as he might justifie at  
an impartial Bar, though man vv ere  
an Independant Creature, and co-  
ordinate vvith him: And this vvill  
sufficiently appear by the ensuing  
Discourse.

---

**SECT.**



## SECT. III.

*The advantage which men have by Religion in respect of their good name; honor being both a Moral and a Natural effect of Vertue and Holiness. The Hypocrisie of some that profess Christianity, an Argument of the excellency of it. Shame the present reward of sin. None dare speak against holiness, or holy men, as such.*

**W**HAT I have hitherto said, hath been *ab æquo*; I shall now argue *ab æntili*, and shew what advantages come to Mankind by a due observance of the *Rules* of the Gospel; whereby the truth of the Apostles assertion will evidently appear, that *Godliness is profitable to all things*, and is the chief interest of the World.

And

And first, let me consider man in his *personal capacity*, and his several interests in such a respect; and I will begin with that which is most *extrin-sick* to him; *viz.* his *good name*, which *Solomon* justly saith is *rather to be chosen then great riches*; and he adds a reason of it, *loving favour is better then Silver or Gold*. That is, the effect of it; it commands a friendly respect from all, and so entertains him where-ever he goes; it is his *har-binger* to bespeak him in all places an honorable reception; it is his *sure-ty*, to vouch him in all his dealings with others: so that there is nothing can more sweeten a Mans life to him, and indeed nothing which generous spirits do more esteem. No greater incentive to virtue among the Heathens then honor; and it is ordinarily seen, that men can more easily bear the loss of goods, then disgrace or contempt; a breach in their estate, then a wound in their name.

Now I will not here speak of that honor, which after a few days shall be put upon all godly men, when they shall

shall appear with Christ in Glory, and shine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, while others shall be cloathed with perpetual shame: Nor will I speak of honor as it is a *moral* effect of godliness; God having promised to *honor those that honor him*: and he that gave the *Israelites* favour in the eyes of the *Egyptians*, and *made them to be pitied of them that carried them away captive*, can give a man esteem and repute among others.

But I shall speak chiefly of *honor* as it is a *natural* effect of godliness: and it is worthy to be considered, that that which at first view seems to reflect dishonorably upon Religion, and which many improve to the reproach of the Professors of it, doth, upon a serious weighing of the whole matter, exceedingly commend it, and argue something of more than ordinary worth in it; and that is the *Hypocrisie* which is found among *Christians*: this implies that there is something in it which is attractive, that men should use such industry to counterfeit it, and seek by a feigned shew

24 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
shew of it to insinuate themselves into the esteem of others, whose good opinion they think most considerable. However, as I have already said (and shall say again in due place) there are many scorn men for it, yet this is an evident proof that it is a thing of good report, and praise-worthy. Though we do not esteem every thing that looks like Gold, because it is sometimes counterfeited; yet this is an argument of the worth of that which is Gold indeed: so, though 'tis true every one that makes profession of godliness, doth not presently deserve the honor and respect of a godly man, because there are many hypocrites; yet it is an argument of the greater worth of such as are godly indeed. Pearls and Diamonds are oftener counterfeited, then those things that are of mean value. What is there that begets an higher esteem amongst men, then that *Humility, Meekness, Goodness, Charity, Justice*, which the Gospel requires, and which every true Christian in some measure hath? It makes a man (as was said of *Vespasian*) the *Darling*

*ling of Mankind*, and makes his memory blessed. What is the ordinary Character which you shall hear of such a man? He was a good man, a quiet man; you might have put your life in his hand, his word was as good as his bond.

And however the Devil cheats men with the hopes of esteem in the World, by a careless neglect of Religion, though they gratifie the greatest part of the World (in some respect) as they justifie their wicked ways by their own practice; yet we shall observe (through the just judgement of God) *shame* is the present wages of sin, *Prov. 13.5. Rom. 6.21.* and indeed the *Heathens* themselves made *honor* the reward of *vertue*; so that a wicked man, according to them, is not capable of it. *Pride* is that which all abhor; *swearing* and *blaspheming* are such sins as none gain by, and therefore will commend no man for; *Drunkenness* discovers so much of a mans weakness, that it makes him obnoxious to every mans pity or scorn; *Lying, Injustice, Oppression*, and other sins against the se-

26 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
*cond Table,* being immediately against  
our neighbour, and so prejudicial to  
the interest of mankind, cannot  
purchase any man any honor or  
esteem. And though it is true, as  
I have before complained, that a god-  
ly man is exposed to scorn and re-  
proach; yet, *first*, it is of such whose  
reproaches we may glory in, and bind  
to us as a Crown. What was said of  
Nero, is true of them, that it is like-  
ly to be something that is good, which  
they speak against; yea, commonly  
such, before they dye, justifie those  
whom they reproached; and when  
they grow wiser, come to be of their  
mind: when they come to lie on their  
sick beds, and to be convinced by  
sense and experience, of what they  
would not believe, or at least consi-  
der before, that there is a *vanity in*  
*evrry Creature, that they must dye, and*  
*that their former pleasure will yield*  
*them no comfort at such an hour;* then  
they reproach themselves more then  
formerly they reproached others; then  
they find that they were the fools for  
despising instruction, and wish now  
they were in the case of those whom  
they despised. And,

And, which is yet more observable, Godliness doth command such an esteem from all, that none dare speak against it; and you shall hardly hear any godly man reproached as such; as the *Jews* would not own that they stoned Christ for a *good work*, but for *Blasphemy*: When wicked men reproach others, they will not by any means acknowledge that it is for *Godliness*, but for *Un-godliness*, for Hypocrisie; for being too nice and superstitious, doing more than God requires, for Covetousness, or such like sins: so that, by their own confession, sincerity, observing what God hath commanded, Charity, &c. are good and commendable; and so they are condemned out of their own mouths. Let sin seek excuses and subterfuges; *Vertue (as truth) seeks no corners, knows no shame.*

## SECT. IV.

*How much Godliness conduceth to the preserving and increase of mens Estates, which Sin doth like a Canker waste and consume. An illustration of Jer. 17. 11. and Hos. 9. 11. Objections answered, which men make from that Justice and Charity which Religion obliges men to, and from those expences and losses which it exposes them to, as also from experience and daily observation.*

**T**He next interest of man in his personal capacity which I shall consider, is the furniture of this life for bearing his charges in his Pilgrimage, while he is on his way towards his long home. And though Riches (by reason of the abuse of them) sometimes seem to be undervalued



valued both by God and man; in the Scripture and other Writings, yet in themselves they are useful and desirable: and if we should understand these things *absolutely* and *simply*, which are spoken of them but in a *certain respect*, and *secundum quid*, (as they speak) it might rather be said, the curse of the Lord makes rich then his blessing. Thereby a man is capable of doing good to others; and our Saviour hath pronounced it more blessed to give then to receive: he is able to command his own affairs; he is freed from the temptations of poverty to a sinful flattery and pleasing of men, in-croaching upon Gods time or mens estates; from distracting cares about the necessaries of this life: they are a defence to him, not onely in his own conceit, but really lifting him up, that the foot of contempt may not trample upon him; and that whatever is praise-worthy in him, may be more conspicuous to others; which is little taken notice of in the poor, whose wisdom, yea, all other graces and vertues are despised. Now

30 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
as the race is not to the swift, nor the  
battel to the strong; so neither are  
riches always to the diligent, or in-  
dustrious, or wise, but to those  
whom God favours with his bles-  
sing. *Godliness hath the promise both*  
*of this life, and that to come;* though  
God hath not absolutely promised  
abundance or superfluities, necessa-  
ries he hath; so that though the  
Lyons (whereby we may according  
to the language of Scripture under-  
stand those who have both cruelty  
and power to oppress others) *may*  
*lack and suffer hunger, those that fear*  
*the Lord shall want no good thing.*  
Again, Godliness may be ranked  
amongst the *moral* causes of *riches*.  
Do but consider what diligence the  
Gospel requires in our particular cal-  
lings; and though (according to  
what I lately said) this is not the  
onely or solitary cause of *Riches*, yet  
it is a means which God doth ordi-  
narily bless. Do but further consi-  
der what sobriety and moderation is  
required in Meat, Drink, Apparel,  
and we shall easily conceive how  
much it doth tend to the increase of  
mens

mens substance, and stopping up those chinks and crannies, at which other Mens Estates do run out. On the other hand, we shall finde many sins, both *moral* and *natural* causes of decays in mens Estates. It is true, all sin doth make men obnoxious to the curse; but there are many sins which derive a curse upon men, which in a special manner (like the rust) devours their riches; particularly *Oppression* and *Injustice*: the Prophet, *Jer. 17. 11.* elegantly shews how the designs of men for setting up themselves, thereby prove abortive: *As the Partridge sitteth upon eggs and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and in the end shall be a fool.*

Some Birds men take care of, to secure them against injuries and violence, as those that are tame; others there are, whose uselesness makes them neglected of all, and so is their security; others there are, able to resist the violence of the Birds of prey; the Partridge is none of these, and so is most likely of all others to mis-

32 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
carry, and prove a prey to violence :  
so the unjust Oppressor may indeed  
gather riches, but he shall soon leave  
them ; *himself* is like the *Grass*, but  
his *Glory* is like the *Flower* of the  
Grass (which oft falls off while the  
stalk stands ) and he shall out-live  
his glory : Some mens glory flies  
away from the *conception*, others  
from the *womb*, others from the  
*birth*, *Hosea 9.11.* some mens designs  
fail while they are projecting and  
contriving them, others while they  
are travelling with them, or labour-  
ing to effect them, *they fade in their*  
*ways* ; others when they have just  
attained them, and arrived at their  
end, as the Rich Man ; but when he  
should solace himself in the enjoy-  
ment of them, they shall be taken  
away like the Corn and the Wine in  
the Harvest or Vintage, and in his  
end he shall be a fool, that is, ac-  
cording to the language of the Scrip-  
ture (wherein words of existence  
are put sometimes onely for appear-  
ance and manifestation) he shall ap-  
pear to be a fool, though formerly he  
seemed to be of the wise of the  
World,

World, that knew how to get most for himself in the scuffle of the World, wherein almost every one scrambles to get as much as he can to himself, to make his own heap biggest; but increasing that *which is not his own*, Heb. 2. 6. but of right belongs to others, he proves like the Dog in the fable, that not content with what he had, but catching at more, lost all. So Adultery (through the curse of God) is a devouring fire, that consumes and wastes a mans substance. So the Covetous unmerciful man unfolds that riddle, Prov. 11. 24. he *scatters by gathering*, whiles he retains his riches, when God requires them for the relief of the poor; or by his extortion and oppression squeezeth out the sweat, yea, it may be the blood of the poor: what is so either gotten or kept, proves a canker to his Estate, to devour it. Yea, there are many sins, which are the natural causes of poverty; and if God should leave men onely to the genuine natural effects of their sin, they would soon *fade in their ways*, as the Apostle saith, James 1. 11. *By means of*

34 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
*a whorish Woman, a Man is brought to*  
*a morsel of Bread;* her words are so  
ensnaring, he is lost that is once en-  
tangled with them, and it is a sad sign  
such a one is abandoned of God. So  
the unmerciful man and the Oppres-  
sor exposeth himself to the curses of  
the poor, yea, to their rage and vio-  
lence, if ever they have the oppor-  
tunity of a popular tumult. So, how  
doth Pride (like rust) eat up mens sil-  
ver and gold! *Drouziness cloaths a man*  
*with rags:* so Gluttony and Drun-  
kenness feed upon mens Estates, till  
they have devoured them. Envy and  
Malice beget contentions and quar-  
rels, which cast men into chargeable  
Law-suits. If men would in their  
Books of Accompts allow some pages  
for their Luts, and set down what  
they spend on them, more then  
what *Nature, Reason, Religion* re-  
quire, and write, So much laid out at  
such a time for *Pride*, so much at an-  
other time for *Pleasure* and Voluptu-  
ousness, so much for *Envy* in a Law-  
suit to vex such a one, so much for  
Entertainments, Buildings, Gardens,  
Festivals, pomp of Funerals (I speak  
not

not against a *decorum* and moderation in such things, answerable to a mans rank and estate, but onely against the superfluity and excess in these things, which mens own consciences will tell them ambition & vain-glory put them upon) let them set down so much *lucrum cessans*, from idleness and negligence in their particular callings; and they shall finde such a Retinue of Lusts (which Religion would make them shake off and abandon) as chargeable as a train of Servants, though the old complaint should be true, *Quot servi, tot Fures.*

Notwithstanding all that I have said, many have such a prejudice against Religion, that they think if a man begin seriously to addict himself thereto, it soon spoils his thriving in the World. As *first*, it is observed by many, that it takes up much of mens time; and many, as soon as they begin to be so strict in matters of Religion, neglect their particular callings. To this I answer, God is but little beholding to men that complain that his service takes up too much of their time: there are none

36 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
in the world amongst the devout Orders, that consecrate their time more entirely to God, then thousands do to the Devil and to their own lusts: yea, how few are there that do not allow more time to Pride, in adorning themselves; to Pleasure, in vain sports and recreations; to idle discourse, to fruitless visits, to superfluous sleep and ease, then God requires to be spent solely in his service? He allows us time enough for our private affairs and particular callings. God is not served onely in prayer and reading, and hearing his Word, but in the works of our ordinary callings, *Col. 3. 23.* What is there said of servants, is true of others also in their several stations, while they duly attend their lawful vocations. It is true, some Christians may not have prudence to share their time equally betwixt their *general* and *particular* callings; but such are ordinarily observed to be young Converts (as they are called) that is, such as have had but late acquaintance with the power and practice of Godliness; and something is to be indulged



dulged to these, who at first conversion many times find so much delight and sweetness in exercises of Religion, that they know not how to leave them off. We know under the Law, he that had married a Wife was dispensed with the first year to stay at home and solace himself with her, and not forced to go out to War.

Some again are ready to complain of the charge of Charity which Religion doth oblige a man to. To such I answer, Nature it self doth bind a man to the same charity that Christianity binds him to; onely Christianity directing us to right principles and ends in such actions, makes them turn to our good account. So that *Christian Charity* is the best *Usury*; God gives us bond for payment, *Prov. 19. 17.* and he is a good Pay-master. If a man would lay up somewhat against an evil-day, he cannot put it into better hands, *Eccles. 11:2.* If the worst come, and the hand of violence should seize on his Estate, yet he may say with him in *Seneca*, *I have that still which I have given away.* Yea, a man of meer humanity and generosity,

38 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
sity, cannot but have such a sympathie  
with others in their sufferings, that  
in relieving them, he relieves him-  
self; as *Alexander* when *Darius* sent  
a complement to him by his Amba-  
sadors for his civility to his Wife,  
Mother, Daughters, whom he had  
taken Captives, returned him answer,  
that *it was in vain to complement with*  
*an Enemy; and the favour he had shew-*  
*ed to them, was not so much out of af-*  
*fection to him, as to satisfy his own na-*  
*ture, which could not insult over the*  
*misery of others.*

For the charge of the service of  
God, let shame for ever cloath them  
as a garment, that complain of it.  
Let a heathen, an *Alexander*, condemn  
them, who when *Leonidas* reprov'd  
him for spending so much incense in  
Sacrifice to his gods, and told him he  
might do that when he had taken  
the Countreys from whence it came;  
having taken them, sent him incense  
in abundance, and sent him word, that  
for the future he should not be sparing  
in his offerings to his gods, for he had  
found by experience, that what was  
offered to them, they paid with Usury.  
And

And further, our expence now under the Gospel about the service of God, is nothing to what it was formerly under the Law. What I said before in respect of time, I may say here in respect of Estate: What men spend upon Religious uses, and works of charity, is not comparable to what men spend upon their Lusts. And whosoever call themselves Christians, should disdain that any should be more free in the service of the Devil, then they are in the service of Christ. Neither is it Christian charity, but blind zeal and superstition, that makes men give away their Estates (as is ordinary amongst the Papists) to maintain others in ease and idleness, under a pretence of devoting themselves to religious exercises, and the imitation of I know not what pretended Saints.

Others are not ashamed to complain of that Justice and Equity that Religion doth oblige a man to observe in his commerce with others, as hindering their thriving in the World: But I have said enough already of the curse that follows Injustice

40 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
justice and oppression, to shew how  
vain this Objection is, besides the  
punishment inflicted by man for  
these sins, which are the more odious  
to men, because they are against our  
neighbour immediately (as many  
other sins are not) so as men are more  
sensible of them, and as much as they  
can, avoid having any thing to do  
with such as are false and unjust in  
their dealings with others.

Some object further the sufferings  
which Religion exposeth a man of-  
tentimes to. But to this I may an-  
swer, as to the former, men ordi-  
narily suffer more for sin. The *De-  
vil* hath had more *Martyrs* then *Christ*  
in most Ages of the World; that is,  
more have suffered for doing the *De-  
vils* works, and fulfilling his Lusts,  
then for the service of *Christ*. How  
many are there that suffer imprison-  
ment, banishment, loss of goods, yea,  
of life, for Injustice, Oppression,  
Murther, Adultery, Sedition, and  
other sins? And I have oft thought  
it might be a great comfort to one  
imprisoned for the cause of Religion,  
for *Christs* sake, to think he might  
have

have suffered the same for his *sin*, if he had been left to his lusts as others; or for his *misery*, for Debt and Poverty, whereas now he suffers the ordinary lot of mankind, in such a ~~cause~~ cause, on such an occasion, as it shall prove his greatest advantage, God rewarding so bountifully, whatever a man undergoes for his sake, both with present spiritual comforts, and future everlasting glory.

Lastly, experience may be objected against all that I have said, it being observed, that the followers of Christ have the least share ordinarily in the things of the World. But I answer to this, It is not because Religion is any way prejudicial to mens worldly Estates, but because God in his free and wise Providence doth for the most part choose the poor of the World to be the Heirs of his Kingdom, both that he may confound the wisdom of men, and stain the pride of their glory, choosing contrary to mans ordinary judgement and choice; and also because out of his bounty he is pleased to give many a portion in *this life*, to whom

42 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
vvhom he intends none hereafter.  
Further, howvever God doth not  
many times give his children super-  
fluities, he ordinarily provides for  
their necessities: and many may  
make *David's* observation, that *they*  
*have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor*  
*his seed begging their bread.* Yea, I  
may adde, as *Psal. 37. 16.* *A little*  
*that a righteous man hath, is better*  
*then great treasures of many wicked;*  
because he is satisfied vvvith vvvhat he  
hath.

The vanity of the creature pro-  
ceeds from the vanity of mens minds:  
vvhen men vvill make the creature  
their chief happines, they must  
needs finde it vanitie end vexation  
of spirit, because it doth not ansvver  
their expectations from it; they  
looking for more from it, then ever  
God put in it. But a godly man ha-  
ving something else for his chief  
good, vvvhich is sufficient to fill his  
most enlarged desires, and to ansvver  
the highest expectations that he can  
have from it; he makes use of the  
creature onely for the end to which  
God hath appointed it, to supply his  
bodily

supply his bodily necessities, to be a *Viaticum* in this his Pilgrimage towards heaven; which end it is sufficient to answer: so that there is none can rejoyce and take pleasure in the creature more then a godly man.

SECT.

## S E C T. V.

*The influence which Religion hath even upon our bodies; how far it conduceth to our health. Diseases of the body ordinarily proceed from the distempers of the Soul. That Temperance, Diligence in our Callings, and Moderation of our Passions, which the Gospel requires and teaches, is the best Remedy against them.*

**T**He next interest of man, which I shall speak of, doth yet more nearly concern him, and that is *Health*; which is not onely, as one calls it, the *Paradise of all sensual pleasures*, wherein they grow and flourish; but the *Salt* that seasons all our worldly comforts, without which we can find very little savour in them; yea, are not onely incapable of enjoying



ing all other things, but of enjoying our selves; yea, the want of it makes us as unable to do good, as, to enjoy good, but onely as we may be examples of Faith and Patience to others.

Now though Religion chiefly concerns the Soul, and seems to have little influence on mens bodies, yet I will confidently affirm ( what may seem a *Paradox* to many) that the Precepts of Christ, well observed, would free as many from Diseases, as his Miracles; they would prevent as many diseases, as his miracles cured. How many are there whose bodies are filled with the sins of their souls, which they have tired and worn out in the service of their insatiable lusts! which are like furious Riders, that tire out their beasts they ride on, before they be tired themselves. Though men are not presently sensible of decays in their health by Riot, Drunkenness, and such like sins; they lay in daily the seeds of those diseases which many groan under in their old age, though others feel them sooner. We ordinarily say,  
that

46 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
that *Excess* kills more then the *Sword*.  
By *Excess*, vve are not onely to under-  
stand eating and drinking to Surfeit  
and Drunkenness, or till Nature be  
so oppressed, that it dischargeth it  
self of its burden; but vvhen men  
make their Appetite, not their Rea-  
son, the measure of their allowance.  
It vvould require the skill of a Phy-  
sician, to enumerate the Diseases  
vvhich are the effects of mens sins:  
but every one may easily observe,  
that the ordinary Rules vvhich the  
best Physicians prescribe for the pre-  
servation of *Health*, require nothing  
more then *Temperance* and *Exercise*.  
The former, Religion strictly en-  
joyns; and though it do not require  
the later, as such, or under such a no-  
tion, yet in effect it requires it of  
most, commanding diligence in mens  
Callings, and condemning Idleness,  
vvhich is the source of so many dis-  
eases, as daily experience vvill e-  
vince; it being obvious to the obser-  
vation of all, that *Health* is the poor  
mans priviledge, and *Sickness* most  
common among the rich, vvho live  
in Idleness; though they have many  
other

other advantages above the poor, for the preservation of their health.

Besides those two causes of Sickness, there is a third, vvhich Religion doth remove, or at least correct; and that is, inordinate Passions, such as *Anger, Fear, Sorrow, Envie*; vvhich have a very malignant influence upon the body: and there is scarce any thing vvhich tends so much to the poizing and balancing of the humours of the body, (vvhich is so necessary for the preservation of the Health) as a vvell-composed temper of Minde, and calmness and quietness of the Soul; vvhich Religion doth not onely teach, but (vvhich is more) doth in a great measure effect; and therein exceeds the *Morals* of Philosophers, as vve shall in due place more fully see.

## SECT. VI.

*Religion forbids us not any pleasures which are agreeable to Nature, Reason, or mans own Interest. None can more freely enjoy pleasures than a godly man.*

There is yet another thing which many account their great interest (and their great prejudice against Religion is, that they conceive it inconsistent therewith) and that is *Pleasure*. Now if we take *Pleasure* in a large sense, as it is taken in Scripture; that inward Joy, Comfort and Satisfaction which accompanies a holy Life, and those *everlasting pleasures* at Gods right hand, which a holy Life leads to, will fall afterwards under consideration. And as for those *bodily pleasures*, which in this place are chiefly intended, Religion doth not at all forbid them, nor deprive a man of them; and it is an unjust calumny of some, that  
 God

God hath put inclinations into mans nature to such things as he hath forbidden him, and that this is the chief cause of so much sin in the world: But these men know not what spirit they are of. It was the suggestion of the devil to man in Paradise, that God (as if he had envied mans happiness) had laid a restraint on them, to keep them from that which (as the devil would perswade them) he knew might better their condition, and advance them to an equalitie with himself; as if it had been a small matter, that he had allowed them such liberty to enjoy all the pleasures of Paradise, and to eat of all the fruit of it, save onely that in the midst of the Garden. But they received a just recompense, for believing the Devil rather then God. It is the same spirit which now perswades men that God hath dealt hardly with us, to interdict us the enjoyment of that wherein we might finde such pleasure and satisfaction; whereas he hath rather manifested his goodness

50 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
to man, in that he hath put into him  
such inclinations, as he may take  
pleasure in those things which are  
necessary for the *propagation* of the  
*Species*, or for the *conservation* of the  
*Individuals* of Mankind: and he  
doth not forbid our pleasure in these,  
but onely forbids *Gluttony* and *Drun-*  
*kennes*, which is excess in the use of  
meats and drinks; and *Adultery*, which  
is the mis-placing of these desires  
which he hath provided for the sa-  
tisfaction of man without sin: and  
we have no cause to complain of  
Gods bounding of us in these things,  
but rather wonder that there should  
be any need of any Laws to forbid  
such irregularities therein; as we  
should wonder that any should make  
Laws strictly to forbid men to burn  
their own houses, to cut their own  
flesh, to drink Poyson, if we consi-  
der the mischiefs that ensue upon  
our exceeding the limits which God  
hath set us in these things, in impai-  
ring our Health, wasting our Estates,  
staining our Honour, breeding dis-  
cords in Families, depriving us of  
Reason, and turning us into Brutes;

ex po.

exposing us sometimes to Mans rage, sometimes to the penalty of Humane Laws. In short; God hath not only provided for the supply of our necessities, but for our delight and comfort, *Psal. 104. 15.*

Secondly, Religion allows a man to enjoy and take comfort in these things vvhich God hath given us, *Eccles 2. 24, 25, 26. 5. 18. 9. 7, 8, 9.* Yea, requires we should rejoyce in them, *Deut. 12. 7. 12. 18. cap. 14. 26. cap. 16. 11, 14. cap. 26. 11.*

Thirdly, there is none can take more pleasure in these things then a Christian: *Eccles 2. 25. Solomon* might hasten as much as any to such pleasure, not so much as he was a King, and had all things in abundance; but as he was a *good man*, and in the favour of God, *Eccles 9. 7.* But this I have elsewhere touched, *Sect. 4. and Sect. 8.*

If any account it hard to be restrained from *unnatural pleasures*, I may say as *Joash* of *Baal*, *Judg. 6. 31.* Will you plead for these? *He that will plead for these, let him presently be put to death.* He that cannot content

52 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
himself with *moderate pleasures*, without *Excess*, let him go and learn of brute beasts, that will not eat and drink to Gluttony and Drunkenness. He that cannot satisfy himself, unless he may wholly prostitute himself to pleasure, and spend his whole time therein, as if he were put into the world, as the *Leviathan* into the sea, to play therein, Psal. 104. 26. let him learn of a Heathen, who would say, *He is not worthy the name of a man, that would spend a whole day in pleasure.* So that Religion restrains us no more in the use of Pleasures, than Nature, Reason, or our own Interest restrains us; but rather teacheth us how we may enjoy them more pure and refined, without any sting of Guilt, or check of Conscience, which may allay the sweetness of them.

SECT.



SECT. VII.

*The advantage which we have by Religion in respect of our Souls. First, in being thereby restored to the image of God, and that spiritual beauty which hath been defaced by sin.*

**I** Now come yet nearer to our selves; to that Divine part whereby we hold intelligence with the upper World, have our Conversation in Heaven, with God and Angels; to these, our bodies are but as a box, a case to a precious Jewel: and the advantages which I have hitherto spoken of, are not worthy to be compared with these that Godliness brings to the soul. And I will first speak of what a Godly man hath thereby in enjoyment and possession, then of what he hath in hopes and reversion.

And I will begin with the Restoration of man to the condition from which he fell, or the renewing of the  
D 3 image

54. *The chief Interest of man's* or,  
*image of God* in him. To have seen  
that great Monarch, *Dan. 4.* in the  
greatest glory, priding himself in his  
Majestie, and after to have seen him  
not onely devested of his glory, de-  
graded from his dignity, but depriv-  
ed of his Reason, and putting on  
the manners of Beasts of the field,  
and conversing among them, would  
have moved a mans compassion ;  
though he, it is likely, was no more  
sensible of his own unhappiness, (be-  
ing bereaved of Humanity) then  
those in the Fable, that being by the  
Enchantments of *Circe* turned into  
Beasts, disdained the offer of *Ulysses*  
to have them restored to their for-  
mer shape ; being debased in their  
souls, as well as metamorphosed in  
their bodies, and so not understand-  
ing the felicity of the Rational life :  
but such were the more to be pitied,  
by how much the less they could pi-  
tie themselves. This is the condi-  
tion of Mankinde. We are all of a  
good house, well descended, of a no-  
ble Stock, and divine Original ; but  
are fallen into decay, have lost the  
lustre of that Family from which we  
came,

came, ( being the off-spring of God ) and we are become *like the beasts which perish*, Psal. 49. 21. So some understand that place, *Man being in honour continued not*, soon fell from his estate of dignity and happiness, and became brutish in his knowledge and affections. Satan, that old Magician, by his Enchantments hath bewitched us from that wherein we were at first created, into the form of Beasts ; so that Men are become Lions, for rage, cruelty, oppression ; Foxes, for subtilty in evil ; Swine, for filthiness and uncleanness ; Dogs, for envie and malice ; Wolves, for rapine ; yea, as *the wild asses colt*, for folly and stupidity. The Scripture accounts it neither incivility nor calumny, to describe men by such appellations. Now it is onely true Godliness, and that Regeneration, ( which miserable Man doth as little understand, and as much despise, as those even now mentioned did the offer of *Ulysses* ) which must restore us to our former state. The Gospel ( as a spiritual Charm ) brings us to that shape and form which our first

65 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
Parents lost. And though poor ignorant men neither understand their deformity, nor that Beauty of holiness which adorns the souls of those who are renewed according to the image of God, (as the Jews despised Christ, and esteemed him not, as seeing no form nor comeliness in him, though he was to those who had a spiritual discerning, and an eye of faith to see that divine excellencie and perfection that was in him, the *chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely*) yet there is an inward beauty of the soul, obvious onely to the eyes of God, that regards *the hidden man of the heart*, and those who have a spiritual discerning to discern spiritual things, which (as the beauty of the outward man consists in colour, proportion, and perfection of parts) stands in a due regard of every faculty and affection of the soul to its proper object, and a just subordination to each other; the superiour irradiated by a divine light, to judge of every thing as the matter requires, and accordingly to command the inferior, which by an obsequious subjection

jection yields to the authority, and executes the commands of the superior, (and is not like a bone out of joint, which is not subject to the commands of the locomotive faculty) and the whole tinged with a Divine holiness, justice and goodness. It would be a sad spectacle to behold a man bowed together, that he could not look up, his eyes closed up with filthy putrid matter, his lips black, and swelled as if they were poysoned; his breath stinking, to the offence of all that come near him; lame of his feet, that he could not go, his bowels hanging out; in a word, from *head to foot full of bruises and putrifying sores*: thus is man by nature to the eyes of God, bowed down to the earth, minding earthly things; his understanding darkned, and the eyes thereof closed by vile and corrupt affections; his lips breaking out with filthy communication, as if the poyson of Asps were under them; his throat like an open Sepulchre, sending forth such unsavory discourse as is offensive to pure ears; that knows not how to tread a right step in the

58 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
way of Gods commandments; void  
of the bowels of pity and compassion;  
and the plague of his heart, ( his na-  
tural in-bred corruption ) breaking  
forth daily into sinful actions, which  
are as so many botches and sores to  
render a man loathsome in the sight  
of God, to whom our inward man  
is as naked and open, as our outward  
man to eyes of flesh. A form of God-  
liness, and the paint or varnish of an  
outward profession, may help to con-  
ceal some of this deformity from the  
eyes of Man; but it is only that *Foun-  
tain set open to the house of David, and  
the inhabitants of Jerusalem to wash  
in, for sin, and for uncleanness,* that will  
restore to Man his primitive sound-  
ness and beauty, as *Naamans* flesh by  
washing in *Jordan* was restored as  
the flesh of a young Child. This is  
the immediate effect of Regenerati-  
on; and though the work is not per-  
fected at once as to degrees, yet it will  
be *as the light that shines clearer and  
clearer till the perfect day, we being  
transformed daily more and more into  
the image of God from Glory to Glory by  
his Spirit.*

S E C T.

SECT. IX.

*Tranquillity of mind the privilege of the Godly Man.*

*A due ordering of the affections, not a Stoical Apathy, necessary thereto. Peace of Conscience unknown to the Heathen Philosophers, and attainable only by true Religion. Objections grounded on the moroseness, and inward troubles of Christians, answered.*

THE next advantage of the Soul in this World by Godliness, is *Tranquillity of Mind*, whereby a man is exempted from the importunity of inordinate passions, and from the secret (though severe) lashes of an accusing terrifying Conscience, which wound deeper than Scorpions. This the *Philosophers* cry up as the sum of a happy life; but what is said of happiness in general, I may apply to this part of it: *Philosophy* seeks it, *Theology*

60 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
*logy findes it, but Religion possesseth*  
*it. As Paul told the Athenians, he de-*  
*clared unto them him whom they igno-*  
*rantly worshipped: so the Christian dis-*  
*covers that which the Heathen Moralist*  
*blindly pursues: but it is only the Godly*  
*man, who hath his soul thoroughly tin-*  
*ctured with true grace, that enjoys*  
*this tranquillity; and hereby I mean a*  
*sedate calmness of affections, whereby*  
*a man is freed from the terrors of an*  
*accusing Conscience, and from the*  
*impetus and violence of unruly passi-*  
*ons, which make him as the troubled*  
*sea, casting up continually mire, and*  
*dirt; discovering in the effects of such*  
*vile affections, the filthiness that lies*  
*deep in the bottom of their hearts, so*  
*foaming out their own shame. These*  
*lusts (like the devil in the poor man,*  
*that cast him sometimes into the fire,*  
*and sometimes into the water, or*  
*made him cut himself with stones)*  
*hurry men with violence, sometime*  
*into one extream, sometimes into*  
*another, and make them pierce them-*  
*selves through with many sorrows, and*  
*make dreadful wounds and gashes in*  
*their own Consciences; rushing them*  
*into*



into a thousand dangers, as the unruly horse doth the Rider into the battel. But I have already said enough of the diseases, quarrels, and other inconveniences, that mens sins subject them to; which are but the fulfilling of these importunate Lusts, which will never let a man rest, but are continually solliciting for satisfaction, and can never be satisfied, but enlarge themselves continually, as Hell; and those fleshly lusts do not only war *against* the soul, but *in* the soul against one another: this is our unhappiness, that we must serve *divers* lusts; so that a man is not only (as one compares him) like a servant in an Inn, where there are many Guests, some calling with importunity one way, some another, some up stairs, some down; but like those that live on the Frontiers of a Kingdom, bordering upon the Territories of another Prince, or betwixt two Garrisons in a civil War; his service is required of both, he knows not whom to obey; both require more taxes than he knows how to pay: thus is miserable man tortured, while he is a slave to his

62 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
his lusts ; one calls one way, another  
calls another way ; *Pride* puts him  
upon one thing, *Covetousness* counter-  
mands ; *Sensuality* calls him another  
way, *Pride* reclaims, and tells him it  
will stain his reputation, spot his ho-  
nour.

Now for freeing a man from this  
basest Slavery , the Gospel is much  
more effectual then all the precepts  
of Morality , as it more clearly lays  
before us the expresse commands, and  
peremptory will and pleasure of the  
Soveraign Law-giver ; as it inforceth  
these vvith promises and threatnings  
of such things as there is either a  
deep silence of amongst the Philoso-  
phers , or vvhich at least they descry  
but at a great distance , and seem to  
make some imperfect discovery of ;  
vvhich the Gospel doth evidently de-  
monstrate. And , vvhich is more  
then all this , there doth a spirit of  
life and power accompany the Go-  
spel vvhere it is received , vvhich  
changeth the soul into another form ;  
there is a divine nature thereby com-  
municated, vvhereby men become as  
it vv ere new creatures , have new  
thoughts,

thoughts, and new affections; whereby they now savour the things of the spirit, as they did before the things of the flesh. The old man is mortified by the spirit; that, as in old-age *desire fails*, (as vve have a proof in *Barzillai*, that tasted not the sweetness of the creatures, as formerly) so vwhen a mans lusts are mortified, he hath not a desire after forbidden vanities, and the pleasures of sin, as formerly. Philosophy indeed hath one *Polemo* to boast of, (and he reclaimed onely from those gross extravagancies vvhich the light of Nature condemns, and vvhich are destructive to mens Honour and Interest) but the Gospel thousands, vvhose natures have been so changed by its power, that they have become quite other persons; and taken off from those more secret and spiritual evils, vvhich bring upon men no present outward inconvenience; vvhich the eye of man cannot discover, nor the hand of man correct. And vvhatsoever Morality can furnish us vvith to perswade, the Gospel hath the same in greater evidence,

64 *The chief Interest of man ; or,*  
dence, and much more. Besides , a  
Christian may more truly say of the  
Gospel, then one said of Philosophy,  
*He thereby learns to want what others*  
*enjoy ;* not that any man hath more  
pleasure , or findes more content in  
vvhat he possesteth, then the Christi-  
an, that hath all sweetned to him by  
the favour of God, and knows that  
it is not his onely portion , that it  
shall not be said to him , as to others  
vvhen they die, *Wo to you , you have*  
*received your consolation ;* but he doth  
not disquiet himself vvith the desire  
of more then God hath given him :  
and it is better to be content vvith a  
little, then to have much, and not to  
be satisfied : better to enjoy perfect  
health , and eat and drink no more  
then Nature requires, then to be trou-  
bled vvith the ΒελιμΟ , or *Appetitus*  
*Caninus*, and be continually eating ; or  
a Dropsie, and be always drinking. So  
for those natural evils vvwhich are the  
objects of our fear and sorrow , as  
they are future and foreseen , or pre-  
sent and felt , the Christian hath the  
advantage of all others for bearing  
them ; not onely as Hope, Patience,  
Meek-

Meekness are the fruits of the Spirit, which he works by that special power & energie which he puts forth in Gods chosen ones ; but as the Gospel doth furnish him with moral arguments much more effectual to perswade to patience, then any that are learned in the Schools of the Philosophers ; as, *It is in vain to be troubled at what we cannot help : All good hath a mixture of evil , and all evil hath a mixture of good : There is a vicissitude of fortunes, so that in adversity a man may hope that prosperity will succeed : We should consider the condition of others, who suffer the like things with our selves : Bearing afflictions , will harden us to undergo them better : ( as Iron grows harder by being oft heated in the fire ) Sometimes injuries prove advantagious to those who suffer them.* These and such-like rational considerations may help to correct the excess of mens passions ; but it is onely the Gospel which discovers the care and singular love of God to his people in all the evils that befall them ; he being with them, sympathizing with them , ( so far as is consistent with his happiness and

66 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
and perfection ) ordering all things  
by his wise and powerful Providence,  
sitting as a Refiner, while he casts his  
Gold and Silver into the Furnace to  
purifie it, ordering all things for the  
good of his chosen : this may make us  
not only patient in tribulation, but  
to glory in it ; not only to conquer in  
our sufferings, but to be *more then*  
*Conquerors.*

Indeed all that assume to them-  
selves the title of Christians ; enjoy  
not this *tranquillity* ; for many arro-  
gate this to themselves, which be-  
longs not to them : those that are  
Christians indeed, attain to this but  
by degrees, none are absolutely per-  
fect in this life ; and perfect peace of  
mind is not an absolute freedom from  
all passion, not an *apathy*, but *tran-*  
*quillitas ordinis*, when every affection  
keeps its own place, and doth its pro-  
per work. When *Fear* is the *Souls*  
*Centinel*, to warn it of approaching  
danger, that being forewarned, it  
may be fore-armed ; when *Sorrow* is  
the *temper* of the Soul, or the ballast  
of it, to keep it steady ; *Angeros For-*  
*titudinis & ingenii*, the mettle of it, to  
fit

fit it for action; and the *Oyle of Gladness*, making the face to shine; and being as marrow to the bones, making our conversation more acceptable and agreeable unto others, our life more pleasing and comfortable to our selves.

But that wherein a Christian hath the greatest advantage, is *Peace of Conscience*: the importunate solicitations of Satan and our own Lusts to the commission of sin, are not so disquieting to the Soul, as the rebukes and clamors of Conscience after the commission of it. The Devil is a meer *Trapan*, that draws men into a Plot against Heaven; and when he hath ensnared them, is the first that accuseth them; sollicitates men importunately to sin by the strongest enticements, afterwards affrights their Consciences, by aggravating their guilt to them; and this is a *preoccupation of Hell*, as peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is the first-fruits and fore-taste of Heaven. As *Vertue is its own reward*, so sin is its own punishment; guilt follows sin, as the shadow doth the body, haunting

68 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*

- ing the sinner like a hideous ghost, and continually terrifying him. It is true, many do not feel these terrors ; but it is not through any true settled peace that they have, but only a senseless stupid ignorance of their own danger : they are like a man asleep on the top of a Mast ; do but awake them to see their danger, & it is enough to affright them into the infernal abyss. While they go on quietly in sin, they are but as a man which hath brib'd the Serjeant, which doth not pay his debt, nor secure him against Arrests ; his debt increases still, and he will have more to pay when he is arrested. It's not a Merchants putting off the melancholick thoughts of his debts, by pleasures and divertisements, that will always quiet his mind ; he doth but beguile himself, and increase his debt ; it is the acquittance of his Creditor that can only secure him. This is the case of many, that when they are haunted, as *Saul*, by the evil spirit of an accusing conscience, as he had musick to quiet his minde, they must have something to divert their thoughts from such disquieting & tormenting objects ; but these are but like

*Opir*



*Opiates*, which may stupifie for a time, and free from pains, but do nothing to the cure of the disease. It is onely the blood of Christ that can *sprinkle our hearts from an evil conscience, cleanse our consciences from dead works*; only an effectual faith that applies this blood to the Conscience. So that the Heathen Philosophers by all their prescriptions could never quiet the Consciences of sinners; & all that peace that they had, was only from ignorance of the severe inexorable justice of God, (which will never pardon sin without satisfaction, and never be satisfied but by the sufferings of Jesus Christ) and the nature of the covenant of grace, or the condition of the Gospel, that none should have any benefit by Jesus Christ, but those who are united with him by an effectual faith, which produceth the fruits of holiness, in a blameless upright conversation : so that as the blood of Christ is the cause of our reconciliation with God, by faith and holiness we actually partake and are assured of the fruits hereof: all these therefore are in several respects necessary to true peace of Conscience. Morality there-  
fore

70 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
fore can never teach a right way and  
means of it, to which the righteousness  
of faith is an hidden mystery. The  
loose prophane Christian can never  
attain it, while his conversation is  
evidently inconsistent with that true  
faith and Gospel-sincerity, which is  
absolutely required of all that will be  
saved : and however they may flatter  
or cheat themselves into a vain pre-  
sumption, or shut their eyes that they  
may not see their danger ; they are  
continually obnoxious to the affrights  
and alarms of such places of Scrip-  
ture, as affirm, *That without holiness  
none shall see God, That if we live af-  
ter the flesh, we shall dye ; That the  
Gate is strait, and the way narrow, that  
leads to life, and there are few that  
finde it ; That many shall seek to enter,  
and shall not be able : That if any will  
be Christs Disciple, he must deny him-  
self, and take up his Cross and follow  
him : That whoever sayes he knows  
God, and keeps not his Commandments,  
or that he hath communion with God,  
and walks in darkness, is a lyar, and  
the truth is not in him : That whoever  
seems to be Religious, and bridleth not*  
*his*

*his tongue, his Religion is vain :* That *he that loves father, or mother, or wife, or children, or house, or lands, more than Christ, is not worthy of him.* Besides others clearly importing, that a man may have much knowledge, and his judgement so far convinced, as to approve of the best things ; may be much in holy duties, take delight in them, hear the Word with joy, do many things which he hears, be blameless as to his outward carriage ; and yet be an hypocrite. So that without daily exercising our selves to Godliness, and a strict watch over all our ways, it is impossible to maintain a settled well-grounded peace of conscience.

If any object, that there are none more disquieted in their consciences, then those that make the greatest shew of Religion ; none more melancholick and morose in their conversation : I may answer, *Solid joy is a serious thing*, (as *Seneca* could say :) it is not most seen in a forced laughter and jollity, which is *as thorns under a pot*, Eccles 7. 6. that for the present make a great noise and blaze,  
but

72 *The chief interest of Man ; or,*  
but neither heat nor last : In the midst  
of it, *the heart*, many times, is sorrow-  
ful, and the end of it is heaviness ;  
and, as *the heart knows its own sor-*  
*row*, the stranger intermedleth not with  
its joy. There is that comfort with-  
in, which every one cannot observe.  
A Godly man needs not have his  
heart revived with wine, and strong  
drink, and merry company, like a  
sick man, that is forced continually to  
have his spirits kept up with Cordi-  
als : he hath that within, which is  
better to him then Wine and Musick.  
It is true, Godly men have more in-  
ward conflicts in their Consciences  
then others ; but this proceeds from  
the sense that they have of their  
own danger ; as they say, *Wisdom*  
*arms misery against it self* ; that is,  
discovering the evils that vve are ob-  
noxious to, makes a man more time-  
rous and suspicious ; vvhiles fools go  
on and are punished, vvithout any fear  
or danger ; go on as an ox to the  
slaughter, a fool to the stocks, a bird to  
the snare, and knows not that it is for  
her life. It is time for a man that  
knows, if he be not set upon the rock  
that

that is higher then himself, if he be not upon that sure Foundation, Jesus Christ, he hangs by the small thread of a brittle life, over the bottomless pit, to look about him, and make his calling and election sure. Again, the greater esteem any one hath of heavenly things, the more careful he is to make sure of them, the more fearful to be deceived about them: (*Tarda solet magnis rebus in esse fides.*) And further, when Satan, who before kept all things in peace, sees himself in danger of being dispossessed, he rageth the more; as he rent the poor man out of whom he was cast, almost to death. And God gives him leave sometimes to winnow his dearest children, for their trial. But for the most part, God leaveth them to such disquietment of spirit, and terrours of conscience, for some sin which they have fallen into, (as in *David's* case) & then their trouble is not because of their piety, but of their defect in it. Or else it is before he intends to raise them to some great eminencie, or fill them with some extraordinary joy; as we

E

may

74 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
may observe, where men have been  
raised exceeding high, their founda-  
tion hath been laid very low in some  
deep abasement ; and so God brings  
them *as a king out of prison to reign :*  
and ordinarily when God lays his  
people low, either by extraordinary  
outward afflictions, or inward tem-  
ptations, he doth recompense them  
for it by those inward consolations  
which are the fore-tastes of heaven :  
hence proceeds that joy the Apostle  
speaks of, which is *unspeakable, and  
full of glory ;* which he that hath ta-  
sted the sweetness of it would not  
want, to be exempted from all those  
temptations and tryals which he hath  
been exercised with. The peace of  
wicked men is but an *agreement with  
bell, which shall be disannulled ; a co-  
venant with death, which shall be bro-  
ken ;* as the mirth of a drunken man,  
who whilst his spirits are raised, feels  
not his wounds, but afterwards feels  
the smart of them, when his Reason  
returns to him. That will be the  
woful end of the carnal mans secu-  
rity ; if he be laid in the bonds or  
fettlers of afflictions, and so come to  
him-

himself, and feel the wounds which he hath by sin made in his own conscience, he is a *Magor-missabib*, terror round about: that is the reason of such horror many times on sick beds; which yet is better then to be hushed asleep by the charming pleasures of sin, and not awake till he be amidst the everlasting flames. So that we may say with the Prophet, *The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.* It is onely by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed to us by faith, that we have peace with God, and so peace of conscience, which is as a *continual feast*, daily to entertain us; as a *brazen wall*, always to secure us; that we may always finde that within, wherewith we may solace our selves, and need not fear that any thing shall disturb or disquiet the tranquillity which we have in our own souls.

## SECT. IX.

*The Reward which Godly men have after this life, the chief advantage of Religion. The excellencie thereof demonstrated from Scripture, from the satisfaction which the Angels have in it, from the glory which wicked men enjoy in this world, from the sweet fore-tasts which Godly men have of it in this life. Wherein it consists; the glory of the body, the happiness of the soul, in the enjoyment of God, in communion with the whole number of perfected Saints, and that for ever.*

**A**Ll that I have hitherto said of the advantage of Godliness, is little in respect of what remains to be spoken. The estate of Man after this life, is of more important consideration.



deration. As it is usually said, there is no proportion betwixt finite and infinite, as there is betwixt two things that are finite, though at the greatest distance in respect of their natures, quality, quantity : so there is a proportion between a *minute* and a *thousand years*, and minutes may easily be multiplied to such a quantity ; but there is no proportion betwixt a *thousand years* and *Eternity*. So that if the misery of Christians in this life were answerable to wicked mens prejudice, and the happiness of wicked men answerable to their own desires, and if both might live in these two different estates a thousand years twice told ; yea, and suppose that after this life wicked men were to be happy to seven, and Godly men but to eight, ( as the Philosophers speak of the degrees of heat and cold ) or that Godly men should be as miserable as wicked men, abating onely one degree ; yet the consideration of an *Eternity* would easily præponderate, in comparing the several states of these persons. The Apostle saith, that *if in this life onely we have hope,*

78 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
*we are of all men the most miserable :*  
not that a wicked man hath more  
real joy or comfort in this life than a  
Godly man ; but we must consider  
that the Apostle is disputing against  
such as denied the Resurrection, in  
a popular Rhetorical stile, wherein  
words are not to be subjected to a ri-  
gid interpretation, but to be expoun-  
ded in a greater latitude : and it is  
usual in several Languages to express  
a thing with the greater Emphasis by  
the *Superlative degree* ; as if he had  
said, We are very miserable men, if  
our hope be onely in this life. A-  
gain, there may be an Emphasis in  
the *Pronoun* ; *q. d.* We, who are the  
off-scouring of all things in the eyes  
of the world, and have in these times  
of Persecution run such hazards, and  
quitted our worldly enjoyments, for  
the hopes of a glorious Resurrection,  
are miserably deceived, if there be no  
Resurrection. And further, though  
Christians have that inward peace  
and comfort in outward tribulations,  
which doth more then counterba-  
lance them, yet this joy is in hope of  
the glory of God, and but an antici-  
pation

pation of that joyful Resurrection which hereafter they expect.

And now I shall come to speak something of the certainty of it, of the nature of it, and of the strictness of holiness necessary to those who would enjoy it. And that we may raise our thoughts to hold some proportion with the greatness of that glory, though it be not possible for poor Mortals to have an adequate conception thereof; *First*, let us consider the great things that God himself hath spoken of it, and how he hath throughout the Scripture propounded it as a sufficient and an abundant recompence, for whatsoever we can do and suffer for him, in comparison wherewith all the afflictions of this life are but light and inconsiderable. The Apostle tells us, *God is not ashamed to be called the God of his people, having prepared a City for them.* The preparations that he hath made for them, are answerable to the bounty and munificence of such a Majesty; though they here mourn whilst others rejoyce, and though he here make them bear the

80 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
Cross, whilst his professed Enemies  
abound in pleasure and prosperity.  
Now it would be much below the  
greatness and glory of such a Ma-  
jesty, to boast of his own gifts above  
the real worth of them, and flatter  
men into his service by possessing  
them with high expectations of great  
matters, which the enjoyment of  
will not answer the hopes which  
God himself hath drawn us into.  
And we may be most secure, that he  
will not give such advantage to any  
Creature to enter into judgment  
with him. Now let us consider what  
some of us have seen in the inter-  
views, perhaps of Princes, the Co-  
ronation or marriage of Kings, or  
on other occasions; yet we have  
heard of more than we have seen.  
We have heard of the Glory of *Solo-  
mon*, and many other great Princes,  
exceeding what our times have to  
boast of; and yet we can enlarge our  
thoughts to something above these,  
and let our minds wander into the  
four corners of the earth, to fetch  
in the glory and splendor of the  
World, to make up to our selves an

*Idea*

*Idea* of happiness. And yet when we have framed such an *Utopia*, such an imaginary Glory, God ( who is too great, and too good, to deceive poor mortals) hath given us to understand, that his preparations for his Saints are somewhat above all this, and that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived what he hath laid up for those that love him.*

In the next place, let us consider that it is the blessed state of Angels, which are first of more enlarged capacities than Men, and yet they find a perfect felicity therein. We should not make a judgement of the state and magnificence of a Princes Court, by the reports of some poor Paisant, who ( we might easily imagine ) would be ready to admire any thing which he should see above the pomp of his Landlords house, where he used perhaps to labour, or go sometimes to pay some poor rent; but we should more easily believe some noble Courtier of a more raised mind, or some Ambassador that hath seen the pomp of several Princes Courts,

82 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
and knows what belongs to State  
and greatness. It had been no great  
matter to have heard *Paul* boast of  
what he saw in Paradise, who  
was carryed from these poor Cotta-  
ges of clay, to the Court of Heaven;  
like *David* from the Sheepfold to  
*Sauls* Court. But the Angels con-  
tinually adoring the Glory of their  
King, and singing perpetual *Hal-  
lelujahs* to him, doth easily per-  
fwade that the Glory of the Cœlesti-  
al Court is far above what mortal  
eyes ever saw. And besides the  
enlarged capacities of Angels, we  
may consider that they are incorpo-  
real, so that these corporeal delights  
and pleasures, which we have the  
most clear and lively apprehension  
of, make up none of their happiness;  
but, besides such delights, which  
it's likely we shall not want in Hea-  
ven, there are more pure and spi-  
ritual delights, enough to make an  
Angel happy; which we can scarce  
conceive any thing of.

A further consideration, which  
may argue the happiness of that fu-  
ture state, is the greatness and glo-  
ry

ry of many wicked men here in this World. Let us but consider, how the great ones of the earth, many of which have been wicked men, do bath themselves continually in rivers of pleasure, and enjoy for many years together whatever their hearts can wish: and what we ordinarily see great ones now enjoy, is little to the Glory of a *Belsazzar*, a *Darius*, an *Alexander*, a *Nero*, the *Grand Signior*, the Kings of *China*; and yet all this is but as the crumbs that fall from the Childrens table. What then can we imagine them to be fed with? these are but the spillings, or the overflowings of his bounty to his very Enemies; how great then is that which he hath reserved for those, to whom he hath purposed to *show the exceeding riches of his Grace*, to give the world a proof of his bounty and glory? as a Prince that wou'd make an entertainment for ostentation, and shew his great respect to some of his special and most beloved friends. We read often in Scripture of the preparations that God hath made for his Saints; which

is

84 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
is but a metaphorical expression of  
the greatness of that glory which  
he hath ordained them to; as those  
entertainments which Men do long  
prepare for, do far exceed what they  
on a sudden make, being unawares  
surprized by the coming of their  
friends.

I will yet add another proof of  
the greatness of that Glory which  
we hope for, taken from the fore-  
casts which many have of it here,  
which hath made them glory in tri-  
bulations, triumph in the flames,  
and not only abated, but wholly  
taken away the sense of the most ex-  
quisite torments; that some *Martyrs*  
have felt no more in the fire, than if  
they had been in a bed of Roses.  
Some after long conflicts and terrors,  
have had such ravishing joys, that  
they have cryed to God to hold, they  
could bear no more. If such glimpses  
have so ravished them, what is  
the full view and clear vision? Let  
us imagine a Confection, the least  
drop of which distilled into a  
draught of Gall, or Wormwood,  
or what ever can be supposed to be  
more.



more bitter and distastful, should wholly alter the tast of it, making it most pleasing and delicious; how sweet would a full draught of it be, without the least mixture of any thing distastful and unpleasing? so if such drops of spiritual joys are able to sweeten the bitterest cup of afflictions, what shall we think of bathing our selves, and drinking our fill in those Rivers of pleasure at Gods right hand for evermore, without the least mixture of any sorrow or trouble to allay the sweetness thereof?

I have hitherto in general shewed that the *Glory of Heaven* is like to be very great and inconceivable, much more inexpressible; but I have not yet attempted to shew vvhat it is, or vvherein it consists: and vvhile I say it is not to be expressed, if I should go about to set it forth fully, there vvould be *contradictio in terminis*; so that all I dare pretend to, is some rude delineation of that state of happiness. Man is made up of tvvo essential parts, Soul and body: noyv though the Soul be the more  
noble

86 *The chief interest of Man ; or,*  
noble part , yet doubtless the body  
shall have its share in this felicity.  
If God hath so far honoured them ,  
as to make them the *Temples of the*  
*Holy Ghost* , and given Christ a  
charge that he should lose *nothing*  
of what he hath given him , but raise  
up our scattered dust at the last day ,  
*Job. 6. 39.* he hath certainly reserved  
a reward for that which hath had  
so great a share in our sufferings here ;  
and he hath told us in general , that  
he will by his Divine power *change*  
*our vile bodies, and make them like his*  
*glorious body.* But sure, as we approach  
nearer to the nature of God  
in our souls , so they shall have the  
greatest share of future glory ; and  
in general, it shall be with the glory  
wherewith Christ was glorified  
from Eternity , and after his suffering ;  
and this shall be by the enjoyment  
of God , which is *the acting*  
*of the perfected faculties and affections*  
*of our Souls upon him.* Every sense  
hath its proper object , in the enjoyment  
of which it takes complacency  
according to the suitableness of the  
object thereto ; and according to the  
the.

the nature of the *object*, and the capacity of the sense for receiving it, or acting upon it, such is the pleasure that it finds therein; and the more noble the faculty and the object are, the more noble is the delight which ariseth from the union betwixt them: so that all Philosophers are agreed, that intellectual delights exceed sensual pleasures. Now in Heaven our Souls shall be perfected according to the capacity of a finite being; otherwise they would be no more capable of enjoying God, than a deaf man of being delighted with musick, or a blind man in the most perfect beauty; therefore we are said *to be made meet, to be partakers of an inheritance with the Saints in light; sanctification* qualifying us *naturally* for Heaven, as *justification* doth *morally*: and God himself shall be the object of our happiness, whom we shall see as he is, and love him, and delight in him according to his goodness and glory. I know it is hard for us to conceive what it is to enjoy God; but to help us in the conception of it,

88 *The chief Interest of man; or,*

3  
+  
+  
it, let us consider a little what it is to enjoy a friend : to have an absent friend, is a comfort ; but to be with him, is a great addition to our contentment, to receive the expressions of their love, and to testify ours to them. Those who are of a more noble and generous complexion, find more true satisfaction herein, than in whatever else this World can afford them : and what is it that endears another to us, but *Love* and *Loveliness* ? where there are amiable endowments in persons of worth, they command an esteem from us, though they know us not, and though we are never the better for them; but where they have a particular affection to us, take us into their bosom, make us of their entire friends, this doth much more endear them to us. Now ( as I have already said ) we find in God, in a far more eminent degree, that which renders the Creatures amiable and lovely. Besides his *goodness* towards the whole Creation, which the Earth is full of, his special favour to Mankind, and it may be to

8  
us

us above many thousands of others; the *exceeding Riches of Grace* towards the *Elect*, which Men and Angels shall admire to the days of Eternity; there is that *Beauty* (that is, intellectual beauty, or such Beauty as is objected to the understanding) which will ravish the whole intellectual Creation. His *Wisdom* is unsearchable, his *Power* irresistible, and his *Grace* and *Clemency* as far exceeding what is to be found in the Creature, as his *Majesty* and *Glory*. *Job* had heard of God; but when he came to see him, abhorred himself to see the infinite distance betwixt the Sovereign Creator, and a poor Mortal, that durst dispute the case with him. Oh! what thoughts shall we have of God, when we come to see him as he is? What astonishment will seize upon us? what confusion will cover us, when we see what a God it is, whose grace we have so oft despised, whose patience we have so long abused, whose authority we have so boldly contemned; and yet see, that he who had us alwayes at his mercy, and could

90 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
could at his pleasure avenge himself  
on us, should pardon us for his own  
sake, and make such glorious pre-  
parations for us? We shall then per-  
fectly understand all the dimensions  
of his love, and continually as it  
were read the stories of it. We may  
the better conceive of it, by fancy-  
ing to our selves what a singular fa-  
vour it would be to have some great  
Prince take a singular affection to us,  
though we did the least of any in  
the World deserve it, and had dis-  
obliged him by a thousand provoca-  
tions; if he should take us home to  
his house, and maintain us alwayes  
at his table, keep us alwayes in his  
presence, this would fall infinitely  
short of that love which God will  
manifest to us: and what an addi-  
tion will it be to our happiness, to  
see him in his glory, who hath loved  
us, and washed us from our sins in his  
blood? the story of whose love we  
have so oft read over, a sight of  
whose face, though but through the  
Glass of Faith, we have so oft, so  
long desired and lamented after, to  
have the society of the innumerable  
com-

company of Angels, and the general assembly of just men made perfect, a meeting of the Saints of all Ages and places, and these perfected both in Grace and Glory, so that they shall have no infirmities, no Pride, Ignorance, self-seeking, to exercise our charity or patience; no sufferings to move our pity or compassion; and we shall never need to disquiet our selves with the thoughts of such a sad parting as *Paul* had, *Acts* 20. 39. We shall keep an *everlasting Holy-Day*, the marriage of the Lamb shall be for ever celebrated by all his Friends: and as *Eternity* will perpetuate our happiness, and make it the greater *extensivè*; so the assurance and consideration hereof will heighten it, and make it greater *intensivè*; and every moment of our felicity will be more sweet to us, in that we shall never be disquieted with the thoughts that our condition ( as happy as it is ) will one day have an end.

## S E C T . X .

*The necessity of holiness to salvation, proved by many plain Scriptures. Objections answered. The imprudence of being but formal half Christians, and the advantages that strict serious Christians have above such.*

**T**Here is yet another consideration which will much enhance the glory of Heaven; but before I come to speak of that, I must shew how necessary an holy conversation is to the enjoyment of it.

Many have entertained a suspicion, that some morose men peevishly envious against the happiness and contentment of mankind, and too superstitiously precise, would lay upon them a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear; confining their liberty to too narrow bounds,



bounds, and frightening them from Religion, by exacting so much strictness and severity. Now that I may not seem to any to make the way to Heaven more narrow than God hath made it, I will but set down the plain words of God himself. Not to speak of what those have attained to, who yet are plainly declared to be under the sentence of condemnation, and in a state of wrath; I shall only instance in some places where the Scripture sets down what is indispensibly necessary to salvation, or what doth plainly argue a man to be in the state of damnation.

*Matth. 5. 20. I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, (who yet went a great way in the Profession of Religion, and in both Moral and Ceremonial righteousness) you shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Cap. 6. 20. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Cap. 7. 13. Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there be many which*

94 The chief Interest of Man; or,  
go in therat; but strait is the gate,  
and narrow is the way that leads to  
life, and few there be that find it. Verse  
21. Not everyone that saith unto me,  
Lord, Lord, shall enter into the king-  
dom of heaven, but he that doth the  
will of my Father which is in heaven.  
Cap. 12. 36. Every idle word that  
a man shall speak, he shall give an ac-  
count thereof in the day of judgement.  
Cap. 16. 24. If any Man will come  
after me, let him deny himself, and  
take up his cross and follow me. Mark  
8. 38. Whosoever shall be ashamed  
of me and of my words in this adulte-  
rous and sinful generation, of him al-  
so shall the Son of man be ashamed  
when he comes into the glory of the Fa-  
ther with his holy Angels. Luke 13.  
24. Strive to enter in at the strait  
gate; for many, I say unto you, shall  
seek to enter, and shall not be able.  
John 3. 5. Except a man be born of  
water, and of the spirit, he cannot en-  
ter into the Kingdom of God. Rom.  
1. 9. If any man have not the spi-  
rit of Christ, he is none of his. Verse  
13. If ye live after the flesh ye shall  
dye, 2 Cor. 5. 17. If any man be in  
Christ,

Christ, he is a new Creature. Gal. 5. 6. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love. Cap. 6. 7, 8. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh also reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. Heb. 12. 14. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Jam. 2. 19, 20. Thou believest there is one God, thou dost well: the Devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 1 Pet. 4. 18. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? 1 John 1. 6. If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lye, and do not the truth. Cap. 2. 4. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. I might add many like words out of the Scripture of truth; but it may be these are enough to make  
make

96 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
make many say, *Who then can be saved?* But let God be true, whatever becomes of man; and it is that which hath been told us, that few find the narrow way that leads to life.

If any object the failings of such as *David* and *Peter*; the same Scriptures that tell of them, tell us of their repentance and bitter tears. If any wonder how this should be consistent with the mercy of God; I answer, there are other objects whereon he sheweth the riches of his mercy, even the small remnant that shall be saved. And when we come to see ( at the last day ) the evil of sin, the holiness of God, the preparations which God hath made for sinners, we shall rather admire that he should save any, than that he should save no more. And if the pardon of sin were such a light matter, that God should be charged with severity, if he hearken not to the cries of sinners, which necessity doth at last force them to, he might have spared the trouble ( as I may take liberty to speak ) of sending his Son; yea,  
(as

( as I may further say ) *spared* his glorying of his unconceivable love in giving Christ to dye for sinners: and it is an ignorant conceit, to think that such a strict exaction of holiness straitens the grace of the Gospel, when it is much of the grace we receive by Christ, to be *turned from our iniquities*, *Acts* 3. 26. *Rom.* 7. 1. &c. The end of our redemption is to be a *peculiar people zealous of good works*, *Tit.* 2. 14. The chief article of the Covenant of Grace is to have the *Law of God written in our hearts*, *Heb.* 8. 9. our chief glory, to be *like our heavenly Father in holiness*, *1 Pet.* 1. 15. The great advantage we have by the promises, to be made *Partakers of the divine nature*, *2 Pet.* 1. 4. So that let men flatter themselves with vain presumptions, and delude their own souls by drawing their desires into opinion, and from wishing they might have peace though they go on in the wayes of their own hearts, proceed to believe that it will be so: *These words will certainly take hold of them*, *Zach.* 1. 6. and judge them at the last day.

98 *The chief Interest of Man ; or ,*

I may further add , that it is the greatest imprudence for men to be but half Christians, or to make some profession of Religion , and not to strive to attain to some perfection in it ; both as the reflection on such an indifferency or luke-warmness will be an aggravation of *mens* misery , while they shall think with themselves they were near to the Kingdom of Heaven , and were shut out because they went not a little further ; they were fair for striking a bargain for the *Rich Pearl*, and yet parted for a small matter ; As if a Merchant should go near to *Pern*, or some other place where there is Gold in abundance, and through a sluggish lazy stupidity, come back empty ; or as if *Columbus* , when he was near to the Coasts of *America*, should have been forced through the mutiny of his Soldiers , to return and lose the honour and advantage of his enterprize. It is pity to run a race , and lose the prize through negligence , when we come within a few steps of the Goal. If we will do any thing in Religion , let us go through with  
it,

it, and not lose the future reward of it, which is most considerable, through sloathfulness.

And it is further to be considered, that those who are but half Christians and smatterers in Religion, know nothing of those spiritual comforts, that delight in communion with God in his Ordinances, joy in the Holy Ghost, which those who are truly godly have experience of: those who are but smatterers or bunglers in any Art, Science, Trade, find them difficult, when they are easie and delightful to those who are Masters of them, and thoroughly understand them; as the wise man saith, *Knowledge is easie to him that understands.* As there is great difference in the reading of a *Classick*, Author by the *Master* and the *Scholar*; the *Scholar* looks upon it as a great task to construe it, and is glad when it is over, not minding the things themselves expressed by the words; while the *Master*, who minds the matter, and understands it well, is transported with pleasure to observe the *elegancy of stile*, *height of fancy*, *depth of judgment*,

F 2

100 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
*ment, strength of reason, subtilty of*  
*Wit, candor of mind* which is in the  
Author. So, while a man is but a Chri-  
stian in name, and hath but a form  
of godliness, the exercises of Religi-  
on are a burthen to him, and he doth  
them only as a task to escape Hell-  
fire, as a School-boy gets his lesson  
to escape the Rod: but he that is a  
Christian indeed, finds that sweet-  
ness in the word of God, that it is to  
him as *honey and the honey-comb, the*  
*joy and rejoycing of his soul.* He is  
glad when he can steal an opportuni-  
ty to pray, he finds so much comfort  
in communion with God therein;  
and can say with Christ, it is *his meat*  
*to do the will of his heavenly father:*  
and the testimony of his Conscience  
is to him as a *continual feast*, and  
makes the practice of holiness more  
pleasant to him, than all the delights  
of sin are to a wicked man. And as  
it is in trading, he that doth not  
thoroughly understand his Trade,  
cannot make his best advantage of  
it to thrive by it, and so grows  
weary of it, or turns bankrupt; when  
he that is well seen in the myltery of  
it,



it, and knows how to improve every opportunity of gain, and so finds the benefit of it, makes a pleasure of his business, and will not be perswaded to leave it off : so he that is but a Christian in shew, and finds not that real advantage which others do of a strict walking with God, nor any return of his formal heartless prayers, grows weary of Religion, and at length it may be casts it off; while the real serious Christian, by the rich returns of his sincere and fervent prayers, and the benefit which he finds by a close walking with God, is so confirmed in his holy profession, that nothing shall make him cast it off, or think it a burden.

## S E C T. XI.

*The misery of wicked men after this life, demonstrated from Scriptures ; from the sufferings of godly men here in this World ; from terrors of Conscience in good and bad ; from the Devils trembling at the thoughts of it, which they have not so much reason for as man. The punishment of loss, with the aggravations of it. The punishment of sense exquisite, without alloy or intermission, without end.*

**I** Shall now proceed to that other consideration, which will make the happiness of Heaven much greater ; yea, which considered apart, doth much commend the excellency of holiness, and clearly demonstrate how much it is the interest of mankind

kind to follow after it : *damnum emergens*, is as much to be considered as *lucrum cessans*. We should not only consider the reward of holiness, but the wages of sin : if a sinner could cease to be, or might be annihilated when he dyes ; or if there were any state between Heaven and Hell, our plea would have less force : but there will be but two ranks of men at the last judgment, whereof one shall go into eternal life , the other into everlasting punishment, *Matth. 25.46.*

Now I shall use the same method in considering this state of ungodly men after the end of the World , which I followed in considering the state of holy men. First giving some general demonstrations of the misery of it , then some particular reasons why it will be so intolerable.

As first, the glory of Heaven may be imagined to be exceeding great, by the preparations which God is said to have made for it : so by the same *Anthropopathy* we may conceive of the misery of Hell, God being said to prepare the punishment of the damned, *Mat. 25.41.* It is said in-

104 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
deed, it is *prepared for the Devil and*  
*his Angels*; but wicked men shall be  
co-heirs with them of the same mi-  
sery. He is laying up his *pile of fire*  
*and wood*, Isa. 30. 33. and laying  
sinners as stubble in the Sun to dry,  
that the eternal flames may prey  
more furiously upon them, Nabum  
1. 10. suffering them to fill up the  
measure of their iniquity, and so to  
treasure up to themselves wrath against  
the day of wrath, that they may be fit  
for destruction.

Let us in the next place consider  
what godly men have suffered in this  
life; read but the *Martyrologies*, and  
see the dreadful torments that the  
Martyrs have suffered, enough to  
make one tremble at the reading of  
them: and if these things be done  
to the green tree, those who are the  
objects of Gods love, and dear unto  
him as the apple of his eye, such on  
whom he hath determined to shew *the*  
*riches of his mercy*; what will be done  
to the dry, with whom he is *angry*  
*every day*, and on whom he will  
shew the *power of his wrath*? if judg-  
ment begin at the house of God,  
what

*what will be the end of those that obey not the Gospel?*

Further, let us consider the terrors of Conscience which godly men have suffered in this World, when they have had lively apprehensions of the displeasure of God against them. If his rebukes have made them consume as a moth fretting a garment; if his frowns have distracted them, and made them roar through the disquietness of their spirit; What will it be for his jealousy to smother and his wrath to burn like fire for ever? Again, let us consider what horrors wicked men have felt in their consciences in this life, which are but the foretaste of that misery which they shall endure for ever. Read but the stories of *Vaninus, Spira, &c.* who have dyed in despair: if such drops of wrath let fall like scalding lead upon the Soul, have so hideously amazed and terrified, surely it is dreadful and astonishing to be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone for ever. And though there be many now, can harden themselves against Ghd, and think by a *Stoical apathy* to bear

206 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
whatever God can inflict; yet some  
have found the beginnings of Hell  
in their Consciences, worse a thou-  
sand times than all the torments  
which the cruelty of Tyrants or in-  
carnate furies could ever invent. And  
whereas some may think ( with *Spi-  
ra* ) that the expectation of future  
misery, is worse then the suffering of  
it; it is a wide mistake, *for according  
as man feareth, so is his anger*, Psa'. 90.

11. Ordinary calamities indeed are  
for the most part worse feared than  
felt; but when a man haith raised  
his mind to the most dreadful and a-  
mazing apprehensions of the displea-  
sure of God, and the severity of his  
vengeance, he cannot reach the vast-  
ness of it, there is yet a *plus ultra*,  
somewhat further, as it is in our ap-  
prehensions of the glory and happi-  
ness of Heaven: and at the last day,  
the great and mighty men of the  
World, who have set the judgements  
of God far above out of their sight,  
and scorned his threats, as a meer  
*brutum fulmen*, or a *Mormo* to fright  
children and superstitious fools, would  
be glad, if they knew how, to run  
under

under the Rocks and Mountains to hide themselves from the terrible Majesty of their Judge; and ( to allude to the words of St. Paul, 2 Cor. 10, 11. ) let such think that as God is now in his word when he seems to be absent from them, such will he be also indeed, when he shall manifest his presence and his righteous judgment. We begin to think meanly of all whom we can see through, or go about; it is incomprehensibleness that commands a veneration; and that we shall alwayes find in God, both as to the glory of his grace, and as to the greatness of his power and wrath.

Let us yet go a step further, and consider the apprehensions which the Devils have of this condition, ( for they and wicked men (as was before observed) are fellow-heirs of the same misery ) and these tremble at the thoughts of it, that is, have dreadful amazing apprehensions at the expectation of it; the consequent in that place being put for the antecedent, according to the usual phraseology of Scripture: they seem not to have so much

much reason to be troubled at the thoughts of it as men have; their sins perhaps may have some aggravations, which the sins of men have not; yet I think there is nothing can aggravate it so as the contempt of the Gospel, which they are not guilty of. They had not a *board after Shipwrack*, whereon they might have saved themselves, if it had not been their own fault. Again, they have no bodies to be tormented, as we have. Many cannot apprehend how the Soul should be capable of any considerable torment; and they think they could laugh at any punishment that could be inflicted on the Soul, were it not for bodily sufferings, which they have a clearer apprehension, and a more lively sense of: but, besides all that we are capable of suffering in our bodies, we are capable of suffering the same in our souls, which the Devils are said to tremble at the belief of. But it is with us, as it is with little children, who are pleased perhaps with the pomp of their Fathers or Mothers Funeral, and proud of their mourning Cloaths, but



but are not sensible of their own loss; when those that are grown up to years of reason and judgment, wring their hands to think of what sad consequence such a loss will be to them. And in this respect it is said, *Wisdom arms misery against it self.* We glory in that which is our shame, and the cause of our misery; while the Devils tremble, who know what it is to lose Heaven, ( having been already in it ) and know what Hell is, because they have felt it; they certainly believe these things, having more understanding to apprehend the clear demonstrations of the truth of them; they have their minds more fixed on these things, which are the matter of their torment, being more in *act* and less in *power* than we are. We know not now what it is to lose God and Heaven; but we shall know, when we shall see them, not to *enjoy* them, but to *envy* them. We are ready to flatter our selves into hopes, that these things may not be true; or our thoughts are ordinarily diverted to other things. And the Devil keeps that out of our minds, which he knows

110 *The cheif Interest of Man; or,*  
knows not how to keep out of his  
own, lest considering well of it, we  
should be induced thereby to believe,  
and so obtain salvation, *Luke 8. 14.*  
For a conclusion of these general de-  
monstrations; I might add Christs  
importunate pressing of men to flee  
from the wrath to come, though  
through so many hardships and diffi-  
culties which he calls them to: he  
wept over sinners, and was grieved  
for the hardness of their hearts, as  
sometimes *Jeremy* was, or as *Aida-  
nus*, a good man in this Nation, wept  
to think of the miseries which were  
coming upon it. Sinners go on  
carelessly and securely, *like an Ox to  
the slaughter, or a fool to the correction  
of the stocks;* but Christ passionately  
pleads with them, to divert them  
from their own wayes, knowing how  
little they consider the misery of those  
devouring flames, which they are  
casting themselves into.

Now for proving more particular-  
ly, that this misery which ungodly  
men shall endure, is very sad and  
dreadful: First, we shall not only  
know (as I before intimated) the  
worth

worth of that glory which we have lost, but we shall be convinced that we have lost it through our own fault. Many think now to harden themselves at the day of judgement against God, and impeach him of rigor and injustice, if he should doom them to an eternal Hell; but then when their consciences are awakened, they will own their guilt, and say as *Judas*, *I have sinned; Mat. 27. 4.* though he did nothing but by the *determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God*; and that which *Satan* had put into his heart, *John 13. 2. Act. 2. 23.* And it will be an aggravation of mens misery, that they should lose Heaven through their own carelessness, and exchange it for a trifle. Should a Man have a dear Wife dangerously sick, and give her poyson to kill her, instead of Physick to cure her, meerly through his own negligence, surely he would bury himself with her, when he should see his own oversight: or should he in a drunken fit stab his Children, certainly his first work, after he should come to himself again, would be to stab himself.

112 *The chief Interest of Man's or,*

felf. But what are these to our souls, our *darlings*, our only ones? *Pfal. 22. 10.* which we wound worse than the poor Lunatick man, that cut himself with stones. We shall come to our selves, and have far different apprehensions of all things, as soon as our souls look out of these dark prisons of our bodies, and begin to see by the light of another World. A child that should have the writings of a fair Estate, and sell them for trifles, looking but upon the bulk of paper or parchment, not regarding the contents of them, and afterwards when he comes to be a man, should live in disgrace and misery, whiles he sees another bear high in the World with his Estate, would bewail too late his own childish vanity: but what is this to our selling of our hopes of Heaven for the pleasures of sin, in the midst of which *the heart is sorrowful*, and *the end of which is heaviness*? regarding the Gospel no more than a story out of *Pliny*, looking on the Scriptures but as walt papers. *Cleopatra's* prodigality in drinking a little Pearl at one draught,

draught, was nothing to ours. We were never put to it, as *Lyfimachus*, to lose a kingdome, and subject our selves to perpetual slavery for a draught of water. Oh! with what indignation shall we reflect upon our own folly and madness, when we shall have time and occasion to settle these things in our hearts! we shall need no Devils to torment us, no fire to burn us; our own consciences will continually scourge us, and we shall for ever be our own tormenters, when we shall be awakened to *smite upon our thigh, and say, What have I done?*

There will be yet a further punishment of sense; the Scripture calls it *Fire and Brimstone*; which if we understand literally, and in a proper sense, we may easily imagine the dreadfulnes of such a punishment, or at least learn to understand it by holding our hand in a hot furnace but for one minute: and this is fire, which shall not suddenly devour or annihilate us (as some imagine) but prey eternally upon men, and never consume them. *The Beast and the false Prophet shall be tormented night and*

114 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
*and day for ever and ever, Revel. 20.*  
10. Otherwise the Devils, with  
whom ( as I have observed ) we shall  
share in the same misery, would ra-  
ther rejoyce, than tremble at the  
the thoughts of the last judgement,  
if they should then be presently redu-  
ced to nothing. See more of this in  
*Austin De civitate Dei, lib. 21. cap.*  
10. But if we understand this figura-  
tively, or metaphorically, then cer-  
tainly God hath chosen that which is  
the most exquisite pain which we  
can conceive of, to set forth some-  
thing else, which we know not how  
otherwise to frame a notion of in our  
minds, and which doth as far exceed  
such sensible things as are used to ex-  
press it, as the glory of Heaven doth  
exceed all that glory which is bor-  
rowed from the Creatures to express  
it to our weak imperfect understand-  
ings. Further, this punishment will  
be without any allay : in Hell there  
is pure darkness ; there will not be a  
drop of water allowed to refresh in  
those raging flames ; and company,  
which some talk of, will but encrease  
mens torment. And as there will be  
no

no allay, so no intermission, no *lucida intervalla* : as there will be no *night of darkness* in Heaven, so there will be no *night of rest* in Hell. And to compleat the misery of that condition, there will be no end of it. Eternity will make their misery perpetual ; but the belief and consideration of Eternity, will make it insupportable, and swallow men up in a hideous despair : they shall be like men tossed in the midst of the Sea, the Waves rolling one after another. If he could see any land behind those proud surges , there might be some hopes ; but to see nothing but the vast Ocean, and the Waves swelling higher and higher, and raging against him like a Giant , this is that which amazeth him : and such will the thoughts of Eternity be then to miserable sinners , when lifting up their heads to see if they can descry any end of their misery, they shall see thousands of Ages multiplying themselves to infinity, and there will be no remedy left, but they must sink down into an everlasting despair ; neither will time or suffering at all  
alleviate

116 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
alleviate their misery, as the Poet  
saith of those, who by enduring po-  
verty make it at length more easie to  
be born: as our multiplyed thoughts  
of the happiness of Heaven, will not  
cloy and weary, but increase our  
pleasure and fruition; so will our  
thoughts of torment, more enrage  
those eternal flames which shall burn  
within us, and make that burning  
furnace glow more and more; that  
as the duration of mens misery draws  
it forth *extensively*, so it will also ag-  
gravate it *intensively*, till it come to  
that extremity, beyond which there  
can be imagined no degrees to which  
it may be further heightened.

SECT



SECT. XII.

*How much Religion conduces to the good of humane Societies. And first, of Families, prescribing such rules to all therein, as well observed, would make them happy in each other.*

**I***F then be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self, saith the wisest of men, Prov. 9. 12. He that hath the fear of God, which is the beginning, or chief and principal of all wisdom, doth ( as is evident from what hath been said already ) best provide for himself, and consult his own sovereign good : and indeed God hath out of his abundant goodness to mankind, so twisted and interwoven their happiness with his own glory in the business of our salvation, that while they best serve him, they do most advantage themselves ; and according as they seek his glory, they pro-*

118 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
promote their own happiness. But yet we are not born for our selves; but as every member should do its office for the common good of the whole body, so every man should, as a member of the Universe or Community, stand the whole in some stead, and not be as a *Wen*, or a *Wolf*, a disease or deformity only, drawing away nourishment from the body, without doing it any service; being an unprofitable burden of the earth, *living undesired, dying unlamented.*

Wherefore I will now come to consider *man* as a *social creature*, and as he stands in relation to others; and so we shall find that a *good man is a common good*, and that Religion and holiness doth not only make men *Tzadikim*, or *just*, but *Chasidim*, or *good*, for which (if for any) men will venture their lives, *Rom. 5. 7.*

And first, I shall consider *Men* in an *Oeconomical state*; Families being the first in order among the Societies of men; others being made up of a conjunction or combination of several families, as families are made up of several persons. Now in Families

milies there is a threefold society :

- |                    |  |                                |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Conjugal</i> | $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{F} \\ \text{A} \\ \text{M} \\ \text{I} \\ \text{L} \\ \text{Y} \end{array} \right\}$ | <i>Husband &amp; Wife.</i>     |
| 2. <i>Paternal</i> |  | <i>Parents &amp; children.</i> |
| 3. <i>Despotic</i> |  | <i>Masters &amp; servants.</i> |

Though all these be not found in every family, yet they are all found in some, and some in all. And let us but consider the Rules prescribed to all these by Christ in the Gospel, and we shall see a perfect draught of *Oeconomicks*, and the most exact pattern of an happy well-governed Family. And if any professing godliness do not come up to such rules, what I have undertaken to prove holds good in *Thesi*; and it is not mens godliness, but their want of it, which is to be blamed; though we may find this amongst Christians, sooner than *Plato* find his *Common-wealth*, or the *Stoicks* their perfect man.

For the *Conjugal* Society, *Husbands* are to love their *Wives* as themselves, as their own bodies : yea, as Christ loved his Church, a proof of which he gave in giving himself for it : so that he is to provide for her whatever is

120 *The chief interest of Man ; or,*  
is meet and necessary ; not to be bitter against her ; to be tender towards her ; giving honour to her, by how much more honour God hath given to him ; to instruct her in whatever is meet for her to learn of him ; and in a word, to forsake all others in the World, and cleave only to her ; reckoning her and himself no more two, but one flesh. *Wives* on the other hand are obliged, to submit themselves to their Husbands, to reverence them, to obey them, diligently and frugally to manage the affairs of their Family, and to ease their Husbands as far as may be of the burden of cares that lyes on them ; and to carry themselves with that prudence, modesty, chastity, gravity, that they may be a Crown to their Husbands ; that the heart of their Husbands may trust safely in them, and that they may do them good, and no hurt, all their dayes.

So in the *Paternal Society*, *Parents* are bound to take care of the Souls of their Children, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to teach them the way wherein

in they should walk, while they are young: and to take care of their bodies also, providing for them, laying up portions for them, and not to use too much rigor and severity towards them, so as to discourage them; yet to give them that moderate correction, which the vanity of childhood and youth many times makes necessary. So *Children* are to obey their Parents in all things lawful; to honour and reverence them; to requite their care of them, by maintaining them (if need require) in their old Age; concealing their infirmities, and abstaining from all expressions of contempt and disrespect.

In the *Despotic* Society *Masters* are obliged to exercise humanity towards their Servants, not ruling them with too much imperiousness or rigor, considering they have a *Master* themselves likewise in Heaven, by whom they would not be dealt with in strictness and severity: they are to provide for them, to give them that which is just for their service; yea, that which is reasonable

122 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
and equal, rewarding industry and  
faithfulness with more than servants  
can in strictness require. So *Ser-*  
*vants* are bound to submit themselves  
to their Masters, not only in doing  
their work, but doing it in simpli-  
city and singleness of heart, as to  
God, considering it as a duty which  
they owe to God, as well as to  
man, and that they must look for  
their recompence from him : so  
they must study to please their Ma-  
sters, not provoking by rude or  
cross answers, not purloyning or  
wasting unnecessarily their Masters  
goods, not taking of their time,  
which is their Masters, to spend in  
their own service, or in pleasure, or  
idleness.

Oh ! how happy would families  
be, if all therein did observe these  
rules ? We should have no complaints  
of the churlishness or carelessness of  
*Husbands*, of the Prodigality and  
disloyalty of *Wives*, of the harshness  
or severity of *Parents* and *Masters*,  
of the undutifulness and unfaithful-  
ness of *Children* and *Servants*.

S E C T.

## SECT. XIII.

*How far Religion advances the happiness of Kingdoms and Common-wealths ; not only naturally, as it prescribes the best Laws and Rules to all sorts of Persons, and keeps men within the bounds of their duty ; But morally, as it brings down blessings, keeps off judgments. The false accusations which Christians have lain under in all Ages. Julian's wicked policy.*

**N**OW let us proceed to consider man in a *Politick State*, as a part of a Kingdom or Common-Wealth : and if we would describe some *Utopia*, or set down a Model of a happy well-governed flourishing Common-wealth ; we need go no further than the Scriptures for our *Maxims*, and describe the several

124: *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
members of it according to what the  
Gospel requires that they should be.  
I know the great ones of the World  
have been jealous of the Kingdom  
of Christ, as *Herod* was troubled  
when he first heard of his Birth. I  
know not what occasion the abuses  
of some Impostors may have given  
to mens prejudice and suspicion; but  
(as I said before) that the observa-  
tion of Christs precepts would pre-  
vent more diseases, than his miracles  
cured; so I may boldly affirm, that  
his spiritual Kingdom, were it set up  
in the world, (that is, did his Laws  
take place, and were they duely ob-  
served, they) would attract more,  
and be more taking, than his suppo-  
sed earthly Monarchy, which made  
multitudes run after him in the dayes  
of his flesh, *John 6*. And it is the  
great honour of Religion, and an e-  
vident argument of the real worth  
and excellency of it, that not only  
those whose corrupt affections have  
baffled their Judgements to believe  
that Religion is but a fancy, a devi-  
sed fable, or at least to wish and pre-  
tend it to be so; but the wisest of  
such



such men as have followed the dictates of natural reason, and men whom none can imagine to have been fore-stalled with too favourable and opinion of Religion, or to have been *δυναμικῶς*, *superstitiously over-aw'd* by a Deity; that these, I say, such as *Plato, Plutarch, Tully, Seneca, Machiavel, Campanella*, should look upon it as such a good Engine for moving the huge bodies of Kingdoms and Common-Wealths; yea, a necessary *basis* to found government upon, (as *Plutarch* sheweth) without which it can no more subsist, than a Cattle or City in the air; it shews clearly that there is that proposed in Religion, which if men (according to their opinion) can be but flattered into a belief of, it will keep them in their due place and order, that every part of such a vast *Machina* may move regularly. And it is a good observation of the *Historian*, that *Rome* had the happiness in the first founding of it, to have such Kings successively, as did by degrees take care of such things as did most conduce to its flourishing and establish-

126 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
ment; and that when *Romulus* had  
built the City, and erected a new  
Kingdome, *Numa Pompilius* did im-  
mediately succeed him, and establiſh  
Religion and the worship of God, so  
far as the light of Nature would guide  
him thereto. And the truth is, the  
belief of another life after this, and  
of some invisible power superior to  
the power of man, is absolutely ne-  
cessary for the swaying and mana-  
ging those two great engines of *Hope*  
and *Fear*, vvhich turn about the  
vvhole World: so that (as *Campanella*  
vvell observes) *Religione e anima della*  
*Republica e difesa della legge naturale,*  
*&c. Religion is the Soul of a Common-*  
*Wealth, and Bulwark of the Law of*  
*Nature*; because the Love and Fear  
of God, and of eternal punishment  
and rewards, do compel men to the  
observation of the Law. What vvill  
a man care for his life, if he appre-  
hend that there is none after this?  
and there is no means to restrain men  
from vvhatsoever insolencies or vio-  
lences they may think necessary to  
the contentment of their present life,  
if they do not look for an after-  
reckoning

reckoning : but they might vvell say,  
*Let us eat and drink, for to morrow  
we shall die ;* and rather contemn a  
miserable life, than omit any means  
for the bettering of it. *He that sets  
light by his own life, is Master of another  
mans,* saith *Seneca.* And vve know  
the form of Indictments in our own  
Law for any crime, is, *Such a one not  
having the fear of God before his eyes,  
did wickedly, &c.* commit such an  
act. And *Abraham* thought when  
he was in *Gerar*, that they vvould not  
stick at any the vilest action; because,  
as he supposed, *the Fear of God was  
not in that place, Gen. 20. 10.* “ So  
“ we find the *Atheist* in *Lucretius, Lib.*  
“ *I.* complaining of his being over-  
“ aw’d by the suspition vvhich he  
“ had of an eternal punishment af-  
“ ter this life : if he could have been  
“ assured that there should be no life  
“ after this, or that then there should  
“ be an end of mens sufferings, he  
“ could easily laugh at Religion, and  
“ despise the threatnings of their  
“ *Vates.* But, seeing he knew not the  
“ nature of the Soul, vvwhether it vvas  
“ propagated vvith the body, or in-

128 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
“ fused ; whether it did dye with the  
“ body, or were cast into the *Stygian*  
“ Lake, he could not free himself  
“ from the fears of an eternal misery  
“ after Death.

But I will come more particularly  
to shew how Religion doth contri-  
bute to the happiness and welfare of  
the Societies of men, setting the boun-  
daries of every ones duty, prescribing  
to all, from the highest to the lowest ;  
telling the great ones of the World,  
that *they which rule over men must be*  
*just, ruling in the fear of God,* whose  
Kingdom is over all, who rules in the  
Kingdoms of men, and gives them to  
whomsoever he will ; and he makes  
them his *Ministers, not to be terrors to*  
*good works, but to evil.* To be *Fathers*  
*to the poor,* and to search out the cause  
*which they know not ; to break the jaws*  
*of the wicked, and pluck the spoil out of*  
*their teeth.* Inferiors are thereby like-  
wise instructed to submit themselves to  
their Superiors, to give them due honour  
and tribute, to be subject for Conscience  
sake, which is the best foundation of  
loyalty and fidelity : As *Constantius*  
would say, Those that would not be

true

true to God, would not be true to him.

If any shall here say, *Quid verba audiam?* We have found the contrary true, and have oft seen Religion made a Cloak to palliate Sedition and Rebellion: I might answer by an *Antistrophe*, retorting the Objection. It seems, Religion is good in itself, because it is made use of to palliate that which is evil: men do not counterfeit ordinary stones, or Iron, but *Gold* and *Pearls*, as I have already upon occasion observed. If Satan be transformed into an Angel of Light, what wonder if his Ministers be sometimes transformed into the Servants of God? I may again say with *Tertullian*, *Si accusasse sat est, quis erit innocens?* None can maintain their innocency, if upon a bare accusation they shall be condemned, without a fair hearing. Not Christ himself, *John* 19. 12. Nor his followers, *Acts* 17. 7. This odious crimination hath been used in several Ages, as the most effectual means to subject Christians to the displeasure of Princes, and to popular hatred; which

G 5

they.

130 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
they had some prece<sup>n</sup>ce for in those  
times, when the Emperors enjoyned  
such things by their authority as  
Christians did justly scruple; which  
occasioned that wicked policy of *Ju-*  
*lian*, (that he might avoid the impu-  
tation of persecution, which he saw  
was grown odious) to set the Hea-  
then Idols by the Emperors statue,  
that while they refused to give *Reli-*  
*gious honour* to the one, they might  
be accused of denying *civil respect* to  
the other.

Let us now descend to consider the  
aspect that Religion hath upon fel-  
low-Citizens or Subjects, or how it  
condu<sup>c</sup>eth to the mutual benefit and  
advantage of them. And first, let us  
consider what an influence that gene-  
ral rule of Christ, *Mat. 7. 12.* would  
have upon all mankind, to bring  
back again the *Golden Age*, if when  
we have to do with others, we would  
put our selves into their condition,  
and consider how we should desire  
to be dealt with in such a case. How  
gently and tenderly would superiors  
carry themselves towards their infe-  
riors; and with how much respect  
and

and observance would inferiors carry themselves to their superiors? the Rich would not withhold from the poor, when he had werewith to relieve him, and supply his wants, but would bring upon himself *the blessing of him who is ready to perish, and make the heart of the poor to rejoyce and sing.* The poor would not by his idleness be unnecessarily burdensom to the rich, or commit rapes upon his charity, but would labour diligently with his hands, and abate the allowance which men ordinarily give to their lusts, that so he might be in a capacity rather to give than to receive. The lender would not take advantage of the necessity of the borrower, nor the borrower ingratfully defraud the lender; the seller would not deceive or over-reach the buyer, nor the buyer undervalue the goods of the seller.

Consider further, how Christ more particularly requires that we should be like God in goodness, doing good to all, forgiving injuries, and making their condition our own, ready to be *ἀντιπαῖς*, for each other (as Ignatius  
oft

132 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
oft speaks ) laying down our lives for  
our brethren, dwelling in love, which  
works no ill to her neighbor, envies not,  
vaunts not it self, is not puffed up, be-  
haves not it self unseemingly, seeks not  
her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no  
evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the  
truth; bears all things, believes all  
things, hopes all things, suffers all  
things. If such commands of Christ  
were observed, men might beat their  
swords into Plow-shares, their Spears  
into pruning hooks; there would be  
no leading into Captivity, no com-  
plaining in our Streets, no vexatious  
suits, no groaning of the oppressed,  
no extremity of poverty or want, to  
put men upon violence, private inju-  
ries, publick sedition. If men would,  
according to the command of  
Christ, obey their teachers, prove all  
things, hold fast that which is good,  
prefer others in honour before them-  
selves, not thinking of themselves a-  
bove what is meet, not being wise in  
their own eyes, but humbly enquire  
after truth, suspecting their own  
judgement, following after those  
things which make for peace and  
edification



edification, studying to be quiet, letting their moderation be made known to all men : and if those that are Teachers and Rulers in the Church would not lord it over the heritage of God, but be gentle towards them, as a Nurse to her Children, not seeking theirs, but them, doing all things for their edifying ; we should soon see an end of divisions, and Schisms, and separations in the Church.

If any here object, that I fancy a Church of *Catharists*, and such purity and holiness in men, as is not to be expected in this World ; I answer, I speak of what is rather to be *desired* than *hoped* for, and what Religion would do towards the happiness of mankind, were the rules of it duely observed, and would men be faithful to the principles of it ; which is sufficient to this *Apology*, which I here make against such as would reproach it, and bring it into disgrace in the world ; and to prove, that the more Religion flourisheth in any Nation, the happier it is, and the better ordered ; and that we may conclude

134 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
clude with the *Tragedian* ; Where  
*modesty, righteousness, holiness, piety*  
*and faithfulness are neglected, that*  
*Kingdom cannot long stand.*

And if any think this would do well indeed, if all would agree to do thus : I answer, the neglect of others doth not discharge us from our duty ; we owe it to God, though men should not deserve it, or requite it with a reciprocal care of Justice and equity. And further, it is a great advantage for raising our honour, when others neglect their duty. *Noah* and *Lot* living amongst ungodly men in a wicked age, shining as stars in a dark night, had a singular testimony of Gods special favour, in his delivering them from the common calamity wherein others were involved, and leaving an honourable mention of them upon record to all generations.

There is yet another way, whereby good men do promote the *weal-publick*, and that is by the education of children, which in well-governed Common-wealths there hath alwayes been a special care taken for. Those  
are.

are counted good Common-wealths men, that build and plant such things as the Common-wealth may be the better for, and enjoy the fruit of when they are dead and gone. But those that stock the Common-wealth with plants of righteousness, which may in future times bring forth the fruits of Justice and equity, do more promote the publick good : and those who let go Foxes and Wolves, are not more worthy of punishment, than such as bring up children in a Common-wealth, which through their fault, and neglect of good education, are addicted to nothing but idleness and luxury. And as Mid-wives form and fashion the head while the bones are tender, so Parents should fashion their childrens minds, and form their manners, while they are tender and pliant ; which if then neglected, do very hardly afterwards yield to Discipline *Ecclesiastical* or *Civil*.

Thus far I have shewed how Godliness doth promote the good of a Nation in a way of *natural causality*. There is yet another way whereby it doth conduce thereto, and that is by

136 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
*a moral causality: God delivering often*  
*the Island of the innocent, which is de-*  
*livered by the pureness of his hands,*  
*Job 22. 30.* These are as the Trees  
in a Cawsey, which having life and  
substance in them, though sometimes  
they cast their leaves, do keep it from  
going to ruine and mouldring away;  
to which the Prophet is supposed to  
allude, *Isa. 6. 13.* I know *Abab*  
looked upon the good Prophet as the  
*troubler of Isragl*, who indeed was as  
the *Chariot and Horsemen thereof* for  
its security and defence. And he justly  
retorted that crimination upon *Abab*  
himself. So in the primitive times, if  
there were War, Earthquakes, plague,  
inundations, the poor Christians must  
to the Lions, as if they were the cause  
of it. When *Aurelius* upon experi-  
ence found that they prevailed more  
by their prayers for the good of the  
Empire, than others could by prayers  
and arms; so that he desired the Se-  
nate to cease their persecution against  
them, lest they should turn those spi-  
ritual weapons against the Empire,  
the effects of which he had found in  
such an eminent instance, and that  
they

they might pray for the good of the Empire. As *Darius* desired that the *Jews* might offer sacrifice of sweet savors unto the God of Heaven, and pray for the life of the King, and of his Sons, *Exra* 6. 10. Upon the same ground *Justinian* ( as we may see, *Constit.* 6. *ad Epiphanium.* ) took such care for the establishing of the true Religion, and for the observation of those sacred Rules which were given by the Apostles as that which would conduce much to the happiness of the Empire, and especially for the settling of a pious Ministry, by whose prayers he hoped for so great blessings upon himself and his Government. And a wise and great Prince in our own memory, doth not only acknowledge that natural influence which Religion hath upon the obedience of Subjects ( whereof I have a little before spoken ) who himself doth best express his own sense of it. *It is no wonder* ( saith he ) *if men not fearing God, should not honour their King. They will easily contemn such shadows of God, who reverence not that supream and adorable Majesty, in comparison of*  
whom

138 *The chief Interest of Man ; or, whom all the glory of Men and Angels is but obscurity.* But as knowing also how far it doth conduce morally to the happiness of a Nation, gives it in charge to his Son ( his Majesty now reigning in England ) *to begin and end with God, and alwayes to keep up solid Piety, and those fundamental truths, which mend both the hearts and lives of men ; it being not only the glory of Princes to advance Gods glory, but the means to make them prosperous, and keep them from being miserable.* Whereupon his Majesty, as remembering such pious words and counsels of His *Royal Father*, did at his first restoration express his just displeasure against such, as pretending a great zeal to his Cause and Service, did not only discredit it by the license of their lives and manners, but hazard the driving away those approaching mercies, which they should rather have acknowledged in their several stations, with circumspection, integrity, and reformation in their lives. It is ordinarily said,

*---Delirant Reges plectuntur Achivi.*

But

But it is true on the other hand also, that Rulers are punished for the sins of the People, 1 *Sam.* 12. 25. God ordering it so in his wise and righteous Providence ; not only as they partake many times in each others sins, but as they have a joynt interest, so as one suffers in the sufferings of another. I remember *Machiavel* (who was never thought to be over-precise, or to be troubled with a bogling conscience ) complains of it in his *Common-wealth*, as that which he feared would be the ruine of *Italy*, “ that  
“ wickedness did so much abound,  
“ and that there was such a decay  
“ of Religion amongst them, and  
“ they were so far degenerated from  
“ the purity of the primitive times,  
“ that they had reason to expect the  
“ vengeance of God upon them.  
“ Whereupon he shews how necessary  
“ it is for Princes to have a special care  
“ for the preservation of the purity of  
“ Religion ; which I am sure is an innocent policy, and the wisest *Maxime* which he layes down : for besides that the Church hath alwayes been a *burdensom stone, which hath broken in pieces*

140 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
*pieces all that have burdened them-*  
*selves with it , Zach. 12. 3. Whilst*  
*Righteousness doth exalt a Nation ,*  
*Prov. 14. 34. Wickedness ( like the*  
*talent of lead in the Ephah, Zach. 5.*  
*8. sinks it down. We know ten righte-*  
*ous persons would have saved a So-*  
*dom ; and God would do nothing a-*  
*gainst it, whilst there was one in it.*  
*And if God did not, for the sake of*  
*such, many times spare Nations, and*  
*shew them some peculiar favour, there*  
*had been no ground for that which he*  
*himself hath pronounced of them,*  
*that they are such, of whom the World*  
*is not worthy.*

SECT.



SECT. XIV.

*An enquiry into the causes why Religion is so much neglected. The remoter causes, the corruption of Mans nature, the malice and power of the Devil; the nearer cause, the prevalency of Sence against Faith and Reason; which is removed, by shewing in how many instances of our Lives, we do by Reason correct the errors of Sense.*

**H**E that shall read what I have hitherto written, and observe the general practice of the World, will perhaps wonder, that if these things be so, men should no better understand their own interest, but generally neglect this which is pretended to conduce so much to the making of the World happy : and what I have said, though it may seem to some to have

142 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
have some shew of probability , will  
hardly obtain belief , but lye under  
some suspicion, like the honest pro-  
jects of some well-wisher to the pub-  
lick good, which never obtained so  
much credit as to be reduced to tryal.  
Wherefore I shall a little enquire af-  
ter the causes of that ungodliness and  
prophaneness, that so generally reigns  
in the World. And first, we know  
the Scripture hath oft taught us, that  
the nature of man is so corrupted by  
that which is called *Original Sin*, that  
*the imaginations of the thoughts of his*  
*heart are onely evil, and that continu-*  
*ally ; his heart desperately wicked, and*  
*deceitful above all things ; his under-*  
*standing so darkned, that he is aliena-*  
*ted from the life of God, through the ig-*  
*norance that is in him : filled with all*  
*unrighteousness: fleshly lusts warring a-*  
*gainst the Soul, and prevailing in our*  
*members to bring forth fruit unto death.*  
*The Wisdom of the flesh is enmity against*  
*God ; so that man is wise to do evil,*  
*but he hath no knowledge to do good.*  
Now experience doth more confirm  
us in the belief of this, than a thou-  
sand Arguments. Again, we oft read  
of

of the enmity of the Devil against mankind ; and though his power be not much discerned by many, yet it is like the influence of Coelestial Bodies ( Sun, Moon and Stars ) upon these sublunary things, powerful and effectual, though not discerned but in the effects : hence we read of his *working effectually in the hearts of the children of disobedience* ; of men being *taken captive of him at his pleasure* ; of the *strength of delusion* , or his *going about like a roaring Lion* ; of *wrestling with principalities and powers* ; and *resisting the Devil stedfast in the Faith*. He that should have seen the poor man cured by Christ, offering violence to himself, and casting himself sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water , would have easily concluded that he was acted by some evil spirit to such things as were destructive to his own nature : so to see men sin against their own souls, and run such desperate hazards against their own interest, is a clear argument that they are acted by some other nature, which seeks their ruine and destruction.

Now

144 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*

Now these may be remote causes of the prevalency of that *Atheism*, which we see and lament in the World; but yet there must be some nearer causes searched out: for (unless it be in some secret *Sympathies* and *Antipathies*) *Man* doth ordinarily act according to Reason, that is, what is either really so, or seems so to him; and there must be some *ratio motiva* to elicit or draw forth the acts of his will. The grace of God is powerful in good actions, yet it works congruously to our natures, moving by the means of some rational arguments and principles: so the efficacy of the Devil is very great in evil actions; yet he makes use for the most part of *moral arguments*: though he had such a hand in *Judas* his treason, and *Ananias* his lying, as that he is said to *put these things into their hearts*; yet, by the whole tenor of their story, we find that there were some moral motives he made use of, and that it was covetousness that did more immediately sway in these sins.

Now (it seems) one main reason of

of mens *Atheism*, which is more near and immediate, is the *prevalency of Sense*; as there are some actions which do prevent the reasonings of the mind, which we call *actiones hominis*, but not *humanae*; which indeed are *actions of men*, but not *humane actions*, proceeding from the essential principle of man. Objects coming to the Sense, before they can have access to the Understanding; the spirits move disorderly, till the Understanding taking cognizance of the matter, do rectifie such motions of the spirits. As in a sudden noise, or unexpected sight, the Senses as the *Centinel*s take the first alarm; but as soon as the news is carried to the Understanding, as the Main-guard or principal Officer, and found to be of no dangerous consequence, this sudden commotion is allayed: so in more important passages of our lives, Sense makes many disorderly sallies and motions, without taking counsel of the Understanding; and objects do make very deep impressions upon them: and the Scripture doth take notice how much we are led by Sense

146 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
in this frail state, wherein we are so,  
as we may all say with the Prophet,  
*Lam. 3. 51. Our eye affects our heart.*  
This is the foundation of the Apo-  
stles argument, *1 John 4. 20. He that*  
*loveth not his Brother whom he hath*  
*seen, how can he love God whom he hath*  
*not seen?* We have a thousand times  
more reason to love God, than to  
love our Brother, considering the per-  
fections and excellencies that are in  
God to render him amiable, and the  
obligations which we are under to  
him, who hath done more ten thou-  
sand times for us, than all the friends  
which we have in the World. But  
whatever reason there may be in the  
thing it self, the Apostle argues ac-  
cording to our poor capacity, and the  
access that things have to us; and  
doth clearly suppose, that things  
which have access to our Senses, are  
more effectual for moving our af-  
fections, than such things as are only  
the object of Faith. So though we  
hear of an infinite Majesty that crea-  
ted and sustains our selves, and all o-  
ther finite beings; who seeth all our  
actions, and will one day call us to  
an

an account for them ; and likewise of an eternal weight of glory, made up of things, which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor ever entered into the heart of man to conceive* : these things do not move us, because they are far out of our sight ; and the things of the world which are nearer to our Senses, and are the immediate objects of them, pleasing the *tast*, delighting the *smell*, tickling and flattering the *Ear*, dazling the *eyes*, have more prevalency upon us.

But yet , upon examination , we shall find this is not sufficient to prevail against those important considerations which I have already proposed, nor to leave mankind excusable for abandoning himself to the pleasures of this life , so as to neglect those better things which are propounded as the reward of holiness. Let us but quit our selves like men, and exercise those common principles of Reason which we exercise in other affairs of our lives ; and though we cannot perhaps thereby silence the clamors of Sense, yet we may confute them, and reject them. Do we

148 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
not ordinarily see men correct the  
errors of Sense by Reason? Do we not  
see them part with their blood, to  
prevent the inconveniency of a dis-  
ease? which for the most part they do  
believe or suspect, not upon the evi-  
dent demonstrations ( but probable  
conjectures ) of a Physician, or at  
best by their own Reason. Do not  
men endure the cutting off of a  
member to save the body, and length-  
en out a miserable life for some days  
or years? Do not men drink the most  
unpleasing potions, for the recovery  
of their health, or repairing their de-  
cayed strength? Do not men cast  
their seed into the earth, in hopes of  
receiving the increase of it? Doth  
not the Merchant send away his  
goods, in hope to receive others for  
them, which may bring him some  
gain and advantage? And what is all  
this, to denying ungodliness and  
worldly lusts; denying our selves the  
pleasure of sin, for the pleasure of  
Heaven? Yea, do we not see men  
ordinarily binding their sons to some  
Apprentiship, for many years, that so  
they may learn a Trade to maintain  
them-



themselves in some repute in the world, when they shall come to years? rather than let them live in idleness and pleasure, giving up themselves to childish sports and vanities when they are young, which would afterwards expose them to poverty and contempt. And he is accounted a cruel and unjust Father, that will not thus love his Child with such a prudent severity, rather than undo him by a foolish indulgence. Yet, how wide a difference is there in these cases? And how far doth this fall short of expressing the unreasonableness of such as will rather enjoy present pleasures, than prepare for future happiness? A Child is bound to an Apprenticeship, and he perhaps dies before his time be out, and so all his labour and charge is lost; or he doth not live seven years a Free-man, after he hath lived seven years in a hard service. But he that gives up himself to the service of Christ, let it be imagined to be as hard as some mens prejudice perswades them; the sooner he dyes, the sooner his service is ended; and though he dye never so

250 *The chief interest of Man ; or,*  
soon, he loseth not his Freedom, but  
is made a Citizen of Heaven ; and  
once entered there, he never dyes, but  
doth for ever reap the fruit of his la-  
bours. Do we not give twenty times  
as much for the *Fee-simple* (as they  
speak) of an Estate, [as it will bring  
us in one year ? and according to the  
same rule, were we sure to enjoy the  
pleasures of sin twenty years, and  
could imagine them to be equal to  
the joyes of Heaven, yet we should  
quit them for those everlasting plea-  
sures which we should enjoy for ever  
*our selves* ; and not only for some  
Ages, as we hope to do Estates on  
Earth, not in *our selves*, but only in  
*our posterity*. Further yet, we see it is  
in *vain to lay a snare in the sight of any  
Bird*, *Prov. 1. 17.* they will not come  
into the Net to feed, if they perceive  
it ; or swallow the bait, when they  
see the hook : yet foolish men do ven-  
ture on Hell, which they are told will  
certainly be the wages of sin ; and will  
enjoy the present pleasures of it,  
though they have all the assurance  
that a man can have of any thing  
which he sees not with his eyes, that  
it

it will cost him his life, and that his Soul must rue for ever in Hell. God indeed doth not manifest himself to us ordinarily here, nor take us up as he did *Paul* into the third Heavens, to shew us the glory thereof ; but he will have us to exercise faith here, and to take his word, which he hath so fully confirmed to us, that we may as certainly trust to it, as if we had the clearest evidence in the world. The Husbandman casts his seed into the ground without any fear or suspicion of losing, having been confirmed by many experiments in the hope of receiving it again with increase ; but a thousand experiments will not so fully perswade, as a divine testimony confirmed by Covenants, Oaths and Seals, (the ordinary wayes of confirmation amongst men : ) so that a Divine faith, founded upon the word of God, is as *the substance of things hoped for*, which are but future, and makes them as it were really subliſt ; and is *the evidence of things not ſeen* ; confirming them to us, and as fully perswading us of them, though they are not obvious to the ſenſe, as any

152 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
Philosophical demonstration can confirm any truth. So that notwithstanding the Apostle owns Sense to be a great means to move affections in this frail state wherein we are, yet Faith serves believers for a sufficient foundation of love and delight : *Though they see not Jesus Christ, they love him, and rejoyce in him with joy unspeakable and full of Glory, 1 Pet. 1.7.* We are short-sighted, and *cannot see afar off, 2 Pet. 1. 9.* but faith as a *perspective* brings things nearer to us, that we may judge of them as really present. Let not our *Senses* therefore usurp authority over *Faith* and *Reason*, but let Faith and Reason have their perfect work ; let not the *men of the World be wiser in their Generation than Children of light* ; let us not be wiser in the things of the World, than in the things of Heaven. We chuse not the fairest of things, ( for the most part ) but such as are more serviceable and durable ; nor the sweetest, but that which is wholesom and nourishing : we chuse not the cleanest or pleasantest way, but that which leads to the place which we are going to. So let

us judge of things, not according as they present themselves to our Senses, but as they have a real intrinsic worth to commend themselves to our judgements ; and let us not judge of things according to their suitability to our present fancies, but as they conduce to our abiding good ; measuring every thing not by *Time*, but by *Eternity*.

H 5      SECT.

SECT. XV.

*Inconsideratenesse, another great cause of Atheism; against which, the best remedies are a serious apprehension of the great moment and importance of spiritual things, frequent reading and hearing the word of God, Christian communion and conference about matters of Religion, mutual admonition. The prevalence of evil customs and habits, the folly of deferring repentance.*

**A**Nother chief reason of that Atheism which abounds so much in the World, is, *Inconsiderateness*: the most important truths do not affect us, any longer than we consider them. The *Platonists* observed this, who made knowledge nothing but remembrance,

membrance; or an actual consideration of that which man knows; not reckoning that to be knowledge, which lyes dead in the *habit*, and doth not at all affect the Soul. And we find that the Scripture layes much weight upon this *consideration* or remembrance; yea, as much as mans salvation comes to. We may observe, *Isa.* 1. 3. there is an *Epimone*, wherein the Prophet layes the sin of *Israel* upon this, that they did not *consider*. So *1 Kings* 8. 47. we may observe affliction brings men to bethink themselves, that brings them to repentance, and repentance is a means to obtain pardon: and we find by experience, that when men are by sickness brought to a serious weighing of matters, they are easily perswaded to make good promises and resolutions; which when their minds are afterwards (by the pleasures of the world) diverted from the thoughts of, they turn to their former course: yea, we see many times that men are so ingenuous as to yield to reproofs, and to condemn themselves and their own wayes, when they are admonished of them.

156 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
them; as if they stood in need of no  
more, but to be put in mind of such  
things as they have in their own  
hearts, and only to have conscience  
awakened. And we find Ezek. 18. 14.  
28. that the turning away of a wicked  
man from the evil of his  
wayes, depends chiefly upon *consideration*.

I have already shewed that the  
Devil is the remote cause of that  
wickedness and prophaneness which  
abounds in the World; yet, he useth  
this as the great means to draw men  
from God, to divert their minds from  
the thoughts of such things as may  
have an influence upon *their* affecti-  
ons and actions to make a change in  
them, as we see plainly in the *Parable*  
of the *Sower*, Luk. 8. 12. *Men hear*  
*the word, then comes the Devil and*  
*takes it away out of their hearts, lest*  
*they should believe and be saved.* First,  
we find by experience that men are  
oft seriously affected with those  
things that they hear, while they are  
lively represented to their minds, and  
pressed seriously upon their consci-  
ences: presently we observe that their  
thoughts



thoughts are quite taken off from those things, and ( like water which hath been warmed ) they return to their old temper again. We see here Christ himself assigns the cause of it; it is the Devil that doth this: where it is supposed that he hath power to do it, though we are not so easily able to understand how he doth it, unless it be by propounding other objects to us. We see here his design in it discovered, which is to hinder their *believing*, and consequently their *Salvation*; which we find by sad experience to be the woful consequent of this his malice. Now the most effectual remedy against this *inconsiderateness*, would be a serious apprehension of the great moment and concernment of these things. It is the means which *Moses* prescribes to the *Israelites*, *Deut. 32. 47.* for setting their hearts to those things which he testified to them: *It is not a vain thing for you, ( saith he ) it is your life; and by those things you shall prolong your dayes.* It is a rule of Prudence which prevails throughout, that *we should look to the main chance, and not neglect the important*

158 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
portant affairs of our life. The Husbandman forgets many petty businesses, but he never forgets to plow and sow. He would be accounted a mad man, that should go to the Market and buy trifles and toys for his children, and forget to buy them bread. A Traytor will not forget to sue out his pardon, or a Man that hath a Suit for his whole Estate, forget to produce his Evidences, and prepare his Answer against the *Term*. This is our case; we are condemned already in law, *John 3. 18.* that is in force against us; we know not how soon we shall be fetched to execution. If a man did but apprehend the danger he is in continually, while he is a wicked man, and in an unregenerate condition, standing continually upon the pits brink, and ready to fall in, it would surely awake him out of his security, and prevent his sleep, till he should have some hope of his pardon; or the thoughts of the infinite advantage that true *Godliness* brings with it, would make him continually apply his heart to it. *The abundance of the rich, suffers him not to sleep; by reason*

reason of his care and sollicitude for the keeping of it : and we have more cause a thousand times to be sollicitous in this case, *lest a promise and possibility being left us of entring into such a rest, we should by any means fall short of it,*

The Ordinances of the Gospel, the reading of the Word, the Communion of the Saints, are prescribed by God as a further remedy of this evil. *Heb. 3. 13.* Daily mutual exhortation is commended as a means to prevent the hardning of our hearts through the deceitfulness of sin, which the more it is indulged, the more it insinuates and prevails upon us. Mens knowledge makes not the word of God less useful to them ; therefore it is a vain ignorant thing for men to neglect it, upon pretence of knowing as much as their Teachers : though the Saints to whom Peter writes, were instructed and established in the truth, yet he thinks it necessary to write those things to them, *2 Pet. 1. 12. to put them in remembrance, and thereby to stir up their pure minds,* *Cap. 3. 1. The words of the wise being*

160 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
*not only as nails to fasten,* that Christians may be established, *but as goads* to excite, that so they may not grow negligent, *Eccl. 12. 11.* and the work of Ministers lies more in awakening the conscience, and quickening the affections, than informing the Judgment: and there are few men that live where the sound of the Gospel comes, but know that, which duely improved, would make a considerable change in their lives: and I think it might be of singular use in a Christian life, for those that have near Relations (if such as are prudent and faithful) or those that have friends which are to them as their own souls, if they live together, and have opportunity to know well each others conversation, seriously to oblige themselves to each other, if they observe any thing in each others lives or carriages which is unbecoming their profession, to take the first opportunity (with all Christian meekness and privacy) to tell them of it; how they spake such a thing unadvisedly, did this thing unseemly, exceeded in the other thing. I know it is a duty of  
zeal

zeal and charity, which all Christians owe to each other ; but those have the best opportunity for it, who have daily intimate conversation with others, and advantage for observing the whole procedure of their lives. And this which I have now been speaking of, doth likewise make that gracious Christian communication which the Gospel requires, more necessary. And for this cause, God did not only require it of the Jews, but further enjoyns them the use of their *Phylacteries*, and the writing the most important Periods of the Law upon their Gates and Posts, that so the things which did so nearly concern them, might be continually sounding in their ears, and represented before their eyes.

I might assign further, some other causes and cures of mens Atheism and wickedness : as the Corruption of mans nature doth strongly incline a man to evil, so Regeneration is that which doth change their natures, and dispose them to holiness. But there are many acts of Morality, which conduce to mens present advantage,  
( both

162 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
( both in a personal and a relative capacity ) to which Regeneration is not absolutely necessary ; and I have already spoken something of it, Sect. 7. therefore I shall say no more of it in this place.

Concerning the prævalency of evil habits and customs, and the prejudice that doth thereby arise against holiness, as also concerning the advantage that one who is a Christian indeed, ( and hath experience of spiritual comforts, and the sweetness of the duties of Religion ) hath above one that is only outwardly a Christian, and doth duties only as a task, I have elsewhere spoken somewhat also, and so supersede from any further consideration of them. I confess, I think the putting off and procrastinating of repentance, detains many in the snares of Satan : but the former part of my discourse doth wholly militate against this folly of men, and deprive them of all such pretence, in that ( besides the imprudence and extream madness of putting off that which we know not whether we shall ever have opportunity for, and leaving

ving

ving a matter of such importance, as our eternal Salvation, at uncertainties) the advantages which men have by observing the precepts of the Gospel, even in this life, do require our most speedy applying our selves to the observance of them, and argue the deferring of our repentance of the greatest folly; and all that have been brought thereto, (especially in their old age) have been ready with *Austin* to complain, that *they have known God too late*, and repented that they did no sooner exchange the pleasures of sin, for the joy and peace which is in believing.

SECT.

## S E C T . X V I .

*Objections from differences in Religion answered : though we could not be fully assured that the Christian Religion is true , yet it would be our wisdom to observe the Rules and Precepts of it. The proofs which some have of the truth of Christian Religion , clearer than those which some desire to have, and clearer than any produced for the truth of any other Religion. Objections from the improbability and seeming contradiction of many things in Scripture , answered. Notwithstanding the difference amongst Christians, all of them are agreed in so much as may serve for the*



*A Discourse of Religion.* 165  
*the well-ordering of our  
conversations.*

**T**Here are some yet that ( being willing to find any pretence for palliating their sin ) will ask how we shall find out the *true Religion*, amidst so many differences as there are amongst men about it. When we see men agreed, and come to some accord about matters of Religion, we will consider of the whole business. Now to such I answer, that if their doubt be concerning the *Christian Religion*, whether that be the only true amongst those which are professed in the *world*: First, the esteem which it hath obtained in the World, and the reverence wherewith it hath been received in all places to which the knowledge of it hath come, may challenge from any wise man the most serious weighing of what is offered for the proof of it; which I will not here stand to sum up, but will only say, ( and that with much confidence ) that whosoever shall but seriously peruse what hath been written in several Ages, for evincing the truth

166 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
truth of it, will see (at least) so  
much probability for the truth of it,  
and so much reasonableness and e-  
quity in the precepts of it, that they  
will account it madness in any to run  
the hazard of losing that reward  
which it propounds, or suffering the  
punishment which it threatens to the  
despisers of it, rather than submit to  
a *Law* so holy, so just, so good. Let us  
suppose it may prove false; yet, what  
would men lose thereby? indeed  
they would lose their future reward,  
but they would have the present ad-  
vantage of it; for (as *Chrysostom* tru-  
ly says, δυσκολώτερον ἢ κακία, scil. τῆς  
ἀρετῆς. *The way of sin is more diffi-*  
*cult than the way of holiness.* And I  
cannot but here subjoyn the saying of  
a Learned man, on *Matth. 11. 29.*  
*Precepta Christi talia sunt, ut si par po-*  
*natur consuetudo unius hominis ad recte*  
*vivendum, alterius ad flagitia, non du-*  
*bie multo dulcior sit futura vita que*  
*secundum virtutem est; gravissima enim*  
*tributa pendunt qui ambitioni, qui ava-*  
*ritie, qui libidini serviunt: that is,*  
“ Suppose several men equally ac-  
“ customed to a sinful and a holy life,  
“ and

“and the way of Vertue and Piety  
“shall be found to be much more  
“pleasant; and those that are Vaf-  
“sals to ambition, covetousness,  
“sensuality, will find the tribute  
“heavy which they pay to such Ty-  
“rants. So that as those who search  
into the secrets of nature to find out  
the *Philosophers Stone*, though they  
attain not their end, yet find out ma-  
ny secrets and experiments, which  
may be pleasing and useful: in like  
manner, those who seek eternal hap-  
piness in the Gospel, though it should  
be supposed that they may miss of it,  
yet they shall find such real advan-  
tage by the observation of those pre-  
cepts that are there given, that their  
labour would not be in vain, but they  
would be sufficiently recompenced  
for it. But now suppose the things  
therein delivered, should prove true,  
what a woful case would those be in,  
which should be found to be neg-  
lecters of it? what a dreadful thing  
would it be for them to *fall into the*  
*hands of the living God*? And you  
that think good to suspend your be-  
lief of the truth of the Gospel, that so  
you

168 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
you may without disturbance enjoy  
the pleasures of sin, and prevent the  
clamors of an unquiet accusing Con-  
science; gird up your loyns like men,  
and tell me, ( I beseech you ) do the  
arguments which you have against  
the truth of *Christian Religion*, as far  
exceed in probability those which are  
alleged for the proof of it, as the  
glory which it propounds ( as the re-  
ward of holiness ) exceeds the plea-  
sures of sin, ( supposing that plea-  
sure in it which you imagine ) or as  
far as the torments threatned as the  
wages of sin exceed the utmost seve-  
rity that men can be imagined to sub-  
mit themselves to in obedience to the  
Gospel? Yea, let men but act con-  
gruously, and allow as much in mat-  
ters of Religion, as in other instances  
of their lives, and we shall find that,  
as the Christians of old argued a-  
gainst the Heathens, that they be-  
lieved many things in Philosophy,  
and humane learning, upon less evi-  
dence than what was offered for the  
proof of Christianity: so men do  
make much greater adventures upon  
more improbable grounds than any  
they

they can be imagined to make by conforming themselves to the Rules of the Gospel upon the grounds laid down for confirmation of it. And if men were as suspicious and wary in other things, as these *Scepticks* in matters of Religion, they must not eat, lest through the malice or negligence of some, there should be poyson mingled with their meat; they must not go into an house, lest it should fall upon their heads; they must not obey any commands of their Princes, unless they should come and deliver them in exprefs words to themselves, because some might possibly counterfeit their hands and seals; yea, it is most evident, that they must forbear so many things, that they would not be fit for converse with men, but would quite overthrow humane Society.

Let me go a little further: I desire (in good earnest) to know of men, what evidence they require to perswade them of the truth of Christian Religion, and it may be what they have already will be found more convincing. Some may fancy a voice  
I from

170 *The chief Interest of Man ; or,*  
from Heaven would satisfy them. I  
answer, they have already a *more sure*  
*word of Prophecy*, 2 Pet. 1. 19. They  
think perhaps if one should come  
from the other World, of their for-  
mer acquaintance, and tell them what  
is done there, they should believe :  
but he that doth not believe the  
Scriptures, *will not believe though*  
*one should arise from the dead*, Luke  
16. 31. Neither do I beg the que-  
stion, in alledging these things from  
Scripture, grounding them wholly  
on its authority ; but assert them  
boldly as *Theorems*, which are de-  
monstrable by Reason ; being assured,  
that there might be more objected a-  
gainst such kind of evidence, than  
is to be objected against that which  
is brought in the Scriptures. For tell  
me, I beseech you, in case there  
should be such a voice from Heaven,  
might we not as easily suspect that  
our senses might be deceived, or that  
it might be formed in the air by some  
spirit, as suspect that we should be  
imposed upon by the Prophets, who  
wrought so many miracles for the  
confirmation of their mission from  
God

God ; who so plainly fore-told many things to be accomplished after many Ages , which could not be fore-  
seen in their causes ; that were holy men, and such as could not be imagined to have a design to deceive , especially the *things* which they delivered being such as exposed them to danger and trouble, and were not likely to bring them any advantage in the World ? Or should *Moses*, or one of the Prophets or Apostles arise from the dead, and tell us they did indeed live here upon the earth in such times, and preach such Doctrine, and work such miracles ; yea, and they have found since their Death , that those things which they Prophecyed, or Preached, are true ; they see those who obeyed their word triumphing in Heaven, and those who contemned it tormented in Hell ; might we not as easily suspect that this might be some Spirit which appeared in their shape to delude us, as that the *Jews* who are Enemies to the *Christian Religion*, should devise a writing and disperse it abroad in the World, which would so plainly confirm the

172 *The chief Interest of man; or,*  
*Christian Religion as the Old Testa-*  
*ment doth, which is at this day own-*  
*ed among the Jews; or that those*  
*Antient Writers should conspire to-*  
*gether to deceive the World, in re-*  
*cording the same things which we*  
*find in Scripture; or that the Scrip-*  
*tures should be translated into so ma-*  
*ny languages, and dispersed all the*  
*World over, so soon after the Apostles*  
*times, and none be so false to the di-*  
*vulgers of it, or so true to the World,*  
*as to give notice of it, if it were a*  
*forgery; or that these things should*  
*be recorded in the Roman Registers,*  
*and the Acts of their Senate, to which*  
*Tertullian durst appeal, if there had*  
*been no such thing? This one thing*  
*would I learn; should one come to us,*  
*as from the dead, in the likeness of*  
*Alexander Cesar, William the Con-*  
*queror, Wickliff, Luther, Calvin, and*  
*tell us in sober sadness that they were*  
*such persons that lived in such a*  
*time, did such things preached such*  
*Doctrine; whether should we be-*  
*lieve such a Testimony sooner than*  
*the unanimous consent of History, con-*  
*cerning them, and those Books and*  
*Writings*



Writings which are generally received as the works of such Men?

If any shall say, that *Turks* and *Heathens* are as confident of the truth of that Religion which they were brought up in, as we are of the truth of ours : I answer, they have not like ground for their confidence. As for the *Heathens*, what became of their *Gods*, their *Oracles*, when the *Hebrew Child* was born, and when the Gospel began to spread in the World? compare the miracles wherewith other Religions have been confirmed, with those wherewith the Gospel hath been confirmed, and see whether they be so many, so confessedly above the power of Nature or Art, so evidently wrought in the sight of all, as those whereby the *Christian Religion* hath been confirmed. What is the reason that the *Turks* admit no enquiry or dispute about matters of Religion, but require an impicite Faith? *Truth seeks no corners, error shuns the light.* Examine the Laws of the *Turks* and *Pagans*, whether there be that *Purity, Equity, Wisdom, consonancy to right reason, and the light*

174 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
of *Nature*, in them, which is to be  
found in the Scriptures. Examine  
the wayes and means by which they  
have been propagated, whether they  
have reached any further than their  
Swords have made way for them,  
whether the *Weapons of their warfare*  
*were spiritual or carnal*: whereas the  
Gospel prevailed through the evi-  
dence and power of the Spirit, a-  
gainst the pretended authority of the  
*Jews*, the Wisdom and learning of  
the *Grecians*, the power and force of  
the *Romans*; and Fishermen were  
too hard for *Rabbies*, *Philosophers*,  
*Judges*, *Generals*, *Armies*.

If any object the improbability of  
some things delivered in Scripture;  
I shall only propound whether there  
be not some things which we are ful-  
ly assured of, either by *experiments*,  
or *Mathematical demonstration*, which  
to others seem as improbable as any  
thing in the Scriptures seems to us;  
and shall we not grant God to be as  
much wiser than our selves, as we are  
wiser than other men; and suppose  
he could as easily convince us of those  
things which now seem impossible to  
us,

us, as we can convince others of those things which they cannot at present believe? And if the seeming contradictions that are in Scripture be urged to weaken the authority of them, they are rather an argument of the integrity and sincerity of the Penmen; and their leaving things so securely, which do not at first sight seem to accord with other Scriptures, shews clearly they had no Plot to deceive the World, otherwise they would have conspired to make their testimonies agree in words more exactly. Yet upon examination of the matter, and considering the several circumstances of time, place, persons, scope, occasion, the several uses of the same word and phrase, the latitude which all Authors use in their writings, the several places and persons of the same name, the several names given to the same place or person, the shortness of Scripture-History, and supplying in one place what is wanting in another, the attending rather to sense and substance, than to words and phrases in citing Scripture; we shall find that there is a

very fair accord between those places which seem to be at the greatest variance : and if we cannot reconcile all places, yet if we consider that we have by attending to such things as I have mentioned already, composed so many seeming differences, we may conclude it is from our own ignorance, that we cannot compose the rest, and that there is yet somewhat else that we are ignorant of, which if we could find out, we might as easily reconcile the rest, which at present seem most irreconcilable. And it is obvious to every one, how many difficulties and contradictions seem to be in every Science, while men are but smatterers in it ; which presently vanish, as soon as they come more perfectly to understand it. But now if this objection be framed against the differences which are among Christians which profess the Gospel, I will by the way observe this, that differencies do most abound, where men (upon serious apprehensions of the weight and importance of the matters of faith) do diligently apply themselves to understand themselves

selves the mysteries of the Gospel, and to see with their own eyes, being affraid to be deceived in matters of such moment, by depending upon the testimony of others, and unwilling to lose their Souls and Heaven, and God, to save the labour of searching after truth: and in those Nations where I have had opportunity to be conversant, I have found most differences amongst them, which have been most addicted to Religion, and most sollicitous about the condition of their Souls; and most agreement amongst them, which have contented themselves to follow others by an implicate faith, without troubling themselves much to search after truth; and where there hath been such a coldness and indifferency in matters of Religion, that all have quietly accorded together: as the *Philosophers* observe, that cold doth congregate *Heterogeneal* things, or such things as are of different kinds, making them all to consist quietly together; which heat doth sever and separate. So that I am almost ready to say with *Luther*, that *I know not how*

178 *The chief Interest of Man; or,  
to believe, that the Gospel hath been  
preached in a place where I do not see  
errors and divisions.*

And it is further observable as an argument of the general concurrence of all Christians in the belief of the necessity and excellency of an holy life, that setting aside some few, who (being themselves slaves to vile affections) have laid down some loose principles to patronize their own corrupt practices, and draw after them such as are laden with the like sinful lusts; men of all opinions and persuasions have earnestly pressed men to the greatest strictness and accurateness in their conversations, and have served themselves at least of a shew of holiness, as the most effectual means to induce men to a belief of their doctrine.

But to come nearer to the matter, let us leave men to suspend their belief a while of those things which they see controverted, and where they find probable arguments alledged on the one side, and on the other, yet their Objection holds not against such things wherein all are agreed, as  
are

are most of the precepts of the Gospel. That rule which was formerly mentioned, given by our Saviour, *Mat. 7. 12.* is not only allowed by all *Christians*, but by the very *Heathens*. *Alexander Severus* did so much esteem it, that he would have it written upon the walls of his Palace. So many other important truths, which are a sufficient Foundation of the most strict and holy conversation, are agreed on amongst all; as, Gods *omniscieny*, overseeing all our actions; a *future judgment*, wherein all must be sentenced according to their actions: insomuch that even Robbers, and such as conspire in wickedness, and seem to bid defiance to Heaven, are self-condemned, and witness for God against themselves, in obliging themselves to secrecie and faithfulness to, each other, by solemn oaths, wherein they swear by the name of that God, whose commands they live in the open breach of, and so acknowledge him as a witness and spectator of their actions, and one who will severely punish the contempt of his authority, in the breach of such oaths.

Many,

180 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*

Many cannot agree indeed about methodizing their notions, and disposing them into such a *système* as that every part may agree, and that there may be an harmony in the whole.

Some cannot agree about the *order and nature of Gods decrees*: yet all believe that no decree doth excuse a mans sin, or that any can pretend any benefit by their election, that have not some evidence of it in their sanctification. Men differ in their notions about the *cause of sin*; yet on both sides they hold that as the kind of fruit is not according to the root or stock, but according to the Graft or Cyon out of which it immediately grows: so the specification of actions depends not upon any remote causes which may have an influence into them, but upon the will of him that is the immediate cause of them; and that there is nothing in the decrees of God, or the temptations of Satan, which will excuse the sinner, or quit him from guilt. Men are at variance about the *extent of the efficacy of Christs death*; but agree



gree that none shall have any saving benefit by it, but those that believe. Men differ about the *Power of nature*, and *liberty of the will*; but on both hands, own so much power as will leave men inexcuseable, and may be a ground of our endeavors; and so much necessity of Grace and Divine assistance, as may bring us upon our knees, and force us to our Prayers. Some difference there is about *Perseverance*; but a consent in this, that he that doth not persevere in holiness, shall never be saved. Some difference there is about the *hand that works have in our justification*; but all agree that they are necessary in those that are justified. Men vary in their opinions about *the obligation of the Law*, *the nature of the Covenant of Grace*, *Christian liberty*, &c. but in this they consent, that the things required in the Law are necessary to be done, though not perfectly, yet sincerely as we can: that the Covenant of Grace is not so far absolute, that men may be saved without faith and holiness: that Christians are not to abuse their liberty, as an occasion to  
licenti-

182 *The chief Interest of Man; or,*  
licentiousness. *Now happy is he that*  
*condemns not himself in the things*  
*which he alloweth.*

In short, let us pray, as if all depended wholly on Gods grace, without our endeavours. Do good works, as if we were to be justified by them. Trust to Gods grace and mercy in Christ, as if we had done no works at all. Live as if there were no Gospel. Hope as if there were no Law. ( I speak not in respect of the lowness and servileness of our Principles, but in respect of the diligence of our endeavours. ) Let us walk watchfully and cautiously, as if we feared falling away; yet love God, and hope in him, as if we were certain to persevere. In short, ( if I may take liberty to mention such names ) let us pray like *Calvinists*, endeavour like *Arminians*, act like *Legalists*, hope like *Antinomians*; be *Papists* in our works, *Protestants* in our Faith. Let me again add, to prevent mistake and offence, I speak not of the principles of mens actions, but the matter and substance of them nor of what they do in *Hypothesis*, which come under such

such distinguishing names; but, of what such mens principles do really (or at least are supposed by others to) lead them to. Finally, *whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.*



FINIS.







*A Catalogue of some Books  
Printed for, & are to be sold  
by T. Basset at the George  
in Fleet-street. 1670.*

Folio s.

**C**osmography in 4 Books, containing the Chorography and History of the World, by Pet. Heylyn. Price 20 s.

The *Voyages and Travels* of the Duke of Holstein's Embassadors into Muscovy, Tartary, and Persia, begun in the Yeer 1633. and finisht in 1639. containing a compleat History of those Countries; where-to are added the Travels of Mandelslo from Persia into the East-Indies, begun in 1638, and finisht in 1640. the whole illustrated with divers accurate Maps, and Figures: written originally by Adam Olearius, Secretary to the Embassy. Englisht by J. Davies. Price 18. s.

An

**Books sold by Thomas Basset**

**An Historical Account** of the **Romish State, Court, Interest, Policies, &c.** and the mighty influences of the Jesuites in that Church and many other Christian States; not hitherto extant. Written originally by *Mons. de Saint Amour* Doctor of *Serbonn*, Englished by *G. Havers*. Price 14 s.

**The History of Barbados, S. Christophers, Mevā, S. Vincents, Antego, Martinico, Montserrat, and the rest of the Caribby Islands, in all twenty eight, in two Books:** containing the Natural and Moral History of those Islands. Illustrated with divers Pieces of Sculpture representing the most considerable rarities therein described. Englished by *J. Davies*. Price 10 s.

**The History of the late Wars in Denmark,** comprising all the transactions both Civil and Military, during the differences betwixt the two Northern Crowns, in the Years 1657, 1658, 1659, 1660. Illustrated with several Mapps, by *R. Manley*. Price 6 s.

**Ecclesia Restituta, or the History of the Reformation of the Church**

at the *George* in *Fleet-street*.

Church of *England*; containing the Beginning, Progress, and Successes of it; the Counsels by which it was conducted, the rules of Piety and Prudence upon which it was founded, the several steps by which it was promoted or retarded, in the change of times; from the first preparation to it by *K. Henry* the 8. until the legal settling and establishment of it under *Queen Elizabeth*: together with the intermixture of such civil actions and affairs of State as either were co-incident with it, or related to it. The second Edition, to which is added a Table of the principal matters contained in the whole book, by *P. Heylyn*. Price 10 s.

*Aerius Redivivus*, or the History of the Presbyterians; containing the beginnings, progress, and successes of that active Sect. Their oppositions to Monarchical & Episcopal Government. Their Innovations in the Church, and their Imbroilments of the Kingdoms and Estates of Christendom in the pursuit of their designs, by *P. Heylyn*. Price 10 s.

The

Books sold by *Thomas Basset*

The compleat Body of the Art Military, in three Books; being perfect directions for the right ordering and framing of an Army, both Horse and Foot, together with all the manner of Fortifications, and the Art of Gunnery; by *R. Elton* Lieutenant Colonel. Price 8 s.

Serjeant *Rolls* Abridgement of the common Law, published by the Lord cheif Baron *Hales*. Price 40 s

Sir *George Crokes* Reports in three volumns. Price 45 s.

All the four volumes of the Institutes of the Laws of *England*, by Sir *Edw. Coke*. Price 47 s.

Animadversions and Amendments of the fourth part of the Institutes of the Laws of *England*, by *W. Pryn*. Price 12 s.

Sir *Edmond Andersons* Reports. Price 14 s.

O&avoes.

The Art how to know men. Price 3 s.

Various Histories written originally by *Claudius Elianus*, Englished



at the *George* in *Fleet-street*.

lished by *T. Stanley*. Price 2 s. 6 d.

*Scarons Novels*, Englished with additions, by *I. Davies*. Price 3 s.

### Twelves.

A help to English History : containing a succession of all the Kings of *England*, the English Saxons, and the Britains : the Kings and Princes of *Wales*, the Kings and Lords of *Man*, the Isle of *Wight* : as also of all the Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, and Bishops thereof : with the description of the places from whence they had their Titles : together with the names and ranks of the Viscounts, Barons and Baronets of *England*, by *P. Heylyn*. D.D. and since his death continued to this present year 1669. Price 2 s. 6 d.

Modern Morality, in two centuries of *Maxims*, collected by *J. D.* Price 1 s.

Now in the Press.

A Persuasive to Conformity, written by way of a Letter to the dissenting Brethren, by a Country-Minister.

F I N I S.